

Heeling Hands



Remember this guy?



Well, playing "foredeck" on the World Champion Shark in 1996 wasn't quite enough for Peter Aker!

He and Sandra have "added a few feet" (see "The Boat" for details) in overall length and taken a year (?) off for warmer climates.

I have their permission and will be receiving their "logs" as they let us "follow them around" on their trip down the Eastern seaboard to and in the Bahamas.

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The Log



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The Latest News:

**Latest Entries (below) posted July 30, 1999
(See also "The Boat", "Eastern Seaboard" and
"Bahamas!")**

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The Latest entry - Posted July 30, 1999!

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]
Sent: Wednesday, July 14, 1999 4:00 PM
To: Pam Aker
Subject: leaving the Bahamas soon

99-07-14

Hello again.

I only sent the last message out yesterday, but hopefully you're not too fed up with reading about our adventures that you can read this one more. It'll be the last for awhile as I'll be putting the boat away for hurricane season and not writing for awhile.

When Sandra and I returned to the BVI from Toronto it was like going home after a vacation. We definitely felt a bit out of place in the rush of the big T.O. We got on to Wayne's boat right away, and started to prepare ourselves for our first "delivery". We spent a few days in the BVI travelling with Tom and Diane showing Diane's daughter (who was visiting the Larkspur) around the island chain. Crossed over to the US Virgins for a brief visit to St. Thomas (read shopping!) before heading over to Puerto Rico. Stayed in a nice marina called Puerto del Ray near Fajardo on the eastern tip of the island country.

The Log

After a few days in Puerto del Ray (including a drive into old San Juan and a 2 hour stop on the road side awaiting repairs of a double flat on the rental car!) Diane's daughter was off to the states and we were ready to go. The weather was good, winds from the southeast at 10-15, so we headed straight for George Town in the Exumas. Four and a half days later we arrived, tired, but no worse for wear and tear.

After a brief layover in George Town, including a visit to our own boat, we took off for Florida. Made stops at night in Compass Cay and Highborne Cay before going straight through to Ft. Lauderdale from Highborne in 30 hours. The day after we arrived (as we sat comfortably in the house) it poured rain and was windy as all get out. Needless to say we were happy to be safe on land again. Had a wonderful 3 day stay with Wayne and Carolyn, who were happy to have their boat back safely. We got just enough rest to recharge the batteries again, when Sandra headed north to work in Belleville for the summer (preganacy locum) and I headed south to the Exumas to get our boat.

After two days of picking up ground tackle, filling the boat with water and fuel, and generally psyching myself up to go, I left George Town and headed north. Had a nice 5 day stay in Black Point, visiting with Clayton, Magic and Anita, and Lorraine, and the other townsfolk. Helped Magic and Clayton put a new mast together for their sloop, and even raced our boat against the sloop in the harbour one afternoon - great fun. From Black Point I travelled up to Compass Cay, where Tucker and I put a floor down under the "treehouse". A week of working in the day, spearfishing in the late afternoon, and eating and sleeping well at night makes you realize how nice it is to have the freedom to do what we are doing with our lives right now. Met a very nice couple, John and Judy on Morning Star, who stayed the whole week at Compass, and who provided Tucker and I with a "mothership" in which we ate and socialized in the evenings.

>From Compass I had three long days of sailing to get up to the Abacos. First to Roberts Cay, then to Royal Island, and finally up to the Abacos where I anchored off Tilloo Cay. I was exhausted when I arrived, especially since our autopilot doesn't function very well in a following wind & sea (which it was at 15 knots the whole way up). After a week of racing with the Larkspur gang again, I'm getting some last minute chores done on the boat, and getting ready for a trip across to Florida. I plan to leave Marsh Harbour here tomorrow morning, work my way slowly north, then scoot across the Gulf Stream probably early next week.

Hope every one has a nice summer.

Regards,

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 1999 3:48 PM

To: Pam Aker

Subject: Antigua Sailing Week

99-07-11

Hello everybody:

When we arrived in Antigua we celebrated with a bottle of champagne and some french cheese and crackers. We were extremely happy that we had arrived safe and sound, and that the whole 1000 nautical miles had entailed only 4-5 hours of sailing to weather!

To our surprise, the morning we arrived into Falmouth Harbour the marina was buzzing with activity. The Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta was only two days away - this is the one where all sorts of classic yachts from all over the world put on a show and have some "friendly" racing against each other. This included the likes of all three of the J-class boats (yes, Valsheeda, Shamrock and Endeavour - all 130' or so each!!), Ticonderoga, Truly Classic, Whitehawk, the new W class boats White Wings and Wild Horses, etc. Truly an amazing site with all the bright work, chrome, bronze and stainless on impeccably maintained yachts.

It turned out we were able to enter the regatta, thanks to the help of a local guy, Eddy Baretta ("Fast Eddy"), who also had a Hinckley B40. With the 3 B40's in the race, we almost had our own one design fleet! Racing was good, with mandatory port tack starts and primarily reaching and running courses. Unfortunately for us, the winds were blowing strong, 18-25 knots, with accompanying seas of 6-8 feet. With the big 150% genoa and the bigger full battened main, we were terribly over powered, and our boat speed suffered. We didn't place so good, but still had a lot of fun chasing Wayne on Glory Days around the course. The best part about it was being side by side all the other classics on the water - a site we'll never forget.

Antigua Sailing Week followed the week after, and entailed 5 long races over 6 days. Local knowledge was a big payoff, as avoiding current and catching land effect wind shifts were essential. We'll know better next time. Diane (Tom's wife), the girls from California (Tami, Janine and Celeste), as well as Will and Shelley (and Ken and "Barbie") joined the three of us so we had a full complement of crew - for racing and partying! The races were exhausting, not so much from the physical exertion or brainwork, but from being out in the heat and sun and salt spray for 6-7 hours. Each night there was some sort of social event - usually sponsored by a liquor agency - and dealing with the previous night's hangover was an ordeal of its own for some. Everything you may have ever read about Antigua Sailing Week - the races, the parties, the fun - is true. With 256 boats registered for the event, everything from 24' sport boats to 152' maxis (Mari Cha III), its an event that every racing sailor needs to experience at least once.

At the end of it all, we were completely exhausted, and ready for a break from the party scene. Two short overnight sails (first to St. Barts, then to the BVI) brought us back to the Bitter End Yacht Club and a well deserved rest. Sandra and I were lucky to find a good price on flights to Toronto, so we took the opportunity to get up for Bill and Christine's wedding and get away from boating for a week. It was nice to see friends in Toronto again, and very kind of Jim and Jackie to let us bunk with them during our stay.

Hope everyone is doing well. I'll update later on.

Peter



Watch this space for more!



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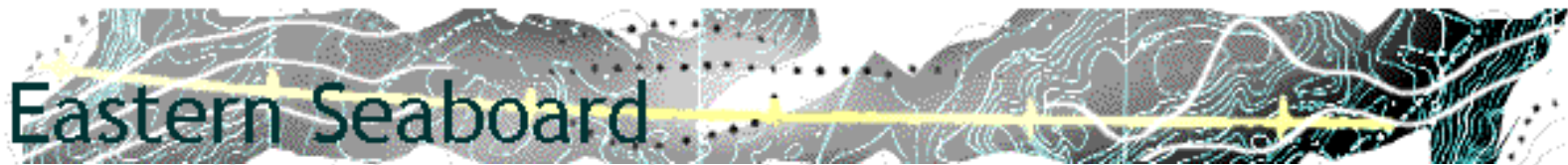
Want to contact Pete and Sandra?
aker@cmcc.ca

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Section 1 - Down the Eastern Seaboard

Ports of Call: [Beaufort](#) [Bellhaven NC](#) [Tom's River NJ](#) [Charleston SC](#) [Beaufort SC](#)
[St. Augustine FL](#) [Titusville FL](#) [Leaving the USA](#)

Date: Sat, 1 Nov 1997 12:20:44 -0500

From: aker@cmcc.ca (Peter and Sandra)

Subject: We're alive!!

Its Thursday night here and I have been dying to get a response to you before the banquet on the 1st. Almost phoned today but then arranged to meet with a classmate in Tom's River, NJ tomorrow. Hopefully I can use the phone line there to send this out. This will be the first chance we've had to send anything since leaving.

We're alive and well and into the Atlantic. Had a good trip through the Canal. Ken Mitchell drove us back to Rochester on Wednesday night and after a spot of tea with the previous owner's wife and daughter, and a bunch of shopping at some marine stores (and some more last minute installations), we left Rochester at 1530 on Friday. Arrived in Sodus Bay after dark but had a great sleep. Up early the next day to try to arrive in Oswego around noon so we could work on the mast. When we arrived we were surprised to find the bilge full of water!! It turned out that a hose clamp had slipped loose letting a full tank of fresh water (~40 gallons) go into the bilge. Having water to within about 4" of the floorboards is a hell of a way to clean the inside of the boat!! Another wet bilge to dry (more about that in another message). After sorting that out we found out that we couldn't get the mast taken down 'til Monday at 0900 as they didn't work on the weekends. We spend two sunny warm days in Oswego - Sandra cleaning the inside of the boat and Peter building a cradle for the mast. Made it through the Erie Canal without event

(unless you call snow on two days and night-time temperatures below freezing an event). Finished installing the autopilot that we purchased from John Dakin just before reaching Lake Oneida (~20 miles long), which worked out perfectly since it was flat as glass, sunny, and REALLY boring to steer. We now use "Otto" every chance we get. If you see John please thank him for us again. Also, if you see Chris Pike, please let him know the dodger and sail cover look great - we're very happy with his work. Met up with a classmate last Friday in Schenectady, and she and her husband came along for the ride through the last set of locks and into the first stretch of the Hudson from Troy to Castleton. When we finished that we went to their friends' country house for a big pig roast - hay rides, bonfire and all - it was quite enjoyable. Mast up on Sunday afternoon and off again Monday am down river. The ride down the Hudson was pretty, but a bit harrowing at times with very gusty winds. We were moving really well (8+ knots) with the full genoa only, but I ended that quickly when it started to climb above 25. Just before the West Point Academy (in a stretch aptly named World's End, with Little Stormy Point off to port) our windspeed indicator was registering a steady 40 and gusts above that! I caught one puff (on just a glance as I was busy hanging on to the wheel) at 52 and Sandra watched it climb to 55 on another. She thought it was going to go right off the dial since it only goes up to 60!! We were doing 6.5 knots under bare poles and idling in gear!! It was quite scary and we were both pleased to stop.

We wanted to stop right after that stretch of channel, but missed the entrance to the marina in Haverstraw (not well marked), and had to go another 1.5 hours to Tarrytown (under the Tappan Zee bridge just outside of New York City) since we couldn't turn back into the wind. In spite of that little bit of excitement its been a great adventure so far. Yesterday we had a gorgeous sail past NY City and the Statue of Liberty and across to Sandy Hook, NJ. Had a great dinner (and drinks) with friends we met during the masting. They are off to St. Lucia via Bermuda as soon as they get some transmission trouble fixed. Today had another great (but brief) sail, 20 miles down the coast to Manasquan Inlet. Will meet with another classmate before heading off to Atlantic City. Should be into the Chesapeake by this time next week.

Thanks again for keeping in touch. Please say hi to everyone at the TS&CC awards night. Wish we could be there, but the weather's warmer here so I think we'll stay! Jacques - I completely forgot that I had your fids in my car the day you dropped us off. I could have just reached in a passed them to you - stupid me. I left them with Jeff and asked him to give them to you at the Shark awards (November sometime?) - I hope that is okay with you.

Thanks again for the "Big One". Our boat has been very popular with all the chocolates to hand out. Hope you guys are not working too, too hard! Say hello to everyone for us.

Will look forward to your next message.

Cheers,

Pete & Sandra aboard Canadian yacht "heeling hands"



Date: Tue, 18 Nov 1997 18:30:51 -0500

Subject: Belhaven NC - getting there!

97/11/14

Hello all:

Things are going well, but its been quite a tiring adventure so far. Since we left New Jersey about 10 days ago it seems that its been constantly raining and windy (one day had gusts to 40 knots - thankfully from behind). Last week, the "wonderful" colours of the Chesapeake were, as far as we could tell, about 15 different shades of grey. One day we pulled in about 2pm at a nearby marina 'cause we couldn't see any more than about 100 yards in front of us, it was raining so hard it was like fog!! Spent the afternoon and evening drying out with the heater. The day after that we travelled 57 miles - our furthest yet - from above Annapolis to about 40 miles north of Norfolk, VA.

We're now in Belhaven NC, about 50 miles away from Beaufort. Spent the last 3 days coming south from Norfolk in the company of two guys (Mike and Steve) on an old wooden boat (38' schooner) from Vermont. The boat is taking on water at a rate that would alarm even me. Since their encounter with a "small" gale off Atlantic City (the one we stayed in Toms River for) they haven't been dry. Sea water comes in through a split garboard seam, the stuffing box and the bow, and rain and waves drip inside throught the deck!! To top it off, two days ago the engine started making a loud grinding and banging noise, and they haven't been able to run it. We escorted them through Albemarle Sound yesterday, and they got a tow through the Alligator-Pungo Canal today from another boat. We'll leave them tomorrow now that they are safely tied up in a marina.

We've seen a little bit of water inside ourselves since the starboard forward hatch and the handrails started leaking, but I think I've got this licked now (temporarily anyway) since I sealed them all with silicone until it gets warm and dry enough to re-bed them. There is nothing worse than finishing a long cold wet day on the water and coming into a wet boat. We're looking forward to getting to Beaufort in a couple of days - its supposed to be a bit of a sailors paradise. Next week we should hit South Carolina, and maybe then it will get warm!!

Bye for now,

Pete & Sandra aboard Canadian yacht "heeling hands"



Date: Wed, 19 Nov 1997 10:20:47 -0500

Subject: Beaufort - Canadian winter in NC

97-11-18

Hello all:

Okay so we're in Beaufort 2 days later than we thought, but let me explain. Spend most of the next day in Belhaven NC enjoying the sunshine and saying goodbyes to our friends on the schooner. They were very depressed we were going - and I think they had run out of their antidepressant chocolate stash too (no Sandra didn't give any up). I think I helped a little by giving Mike my foul weather boots - they always were too small and made my feet cold. Besides, that morning I had found a great pair of shrimper's white rubber boots in a shoe store for \$17!

We got the engine warmed up and walked the boat back out of this long slip they had us nosed in to. As we approached the end of the dock, I reached down to put her into reverse but the shifter didn't move a millimeter. Oh no... Northern Spy's bad luck was rubbing off on us. After undoing the shifter cable at either end and finding that I could shift the transmission manually I was much relieved at least I didn't need to repair a transmission! It turns out that the shifter has a spring-loaded ball bearing that holds the stick into place when in neutral that had somehow become jammed. Nothing a small bit of filing and a new load of grease could cure. One hour later (1300 hrs) we were on our way. A beautiful sunny day, fresh (10-12 knots) breeze from behind, and a plan to go only about 20 miles across the last bit of Pamlico Sound. The wind died and we motored into a beautiful anchorage under clear sunny skies. That's a change!! The forecast was for the skies to remain clear, and for the wind to remain from the NW at 10-15 knots overnight, but strangely enough the light breeze in this anchorage was from the SE. I thought it was just a local effect ... I should have known better.

We set the anchor to the SE breeze well behind the other boats in the anchorage. After all, "there's nothing worse than some jerk coming into an anchorage late and dropping the hook right in front of you, right?" I mentioned to a solo sailor in a small homemade green boat as I went by him. We watched our first beautiful sunset, ate a great meal of BBQ chicken and shared a bottle of wine. Into bed early with the plan to get an early start to get into Oriental early for a chance at one of the two slips available (free) at the town dock.

At 0400 hrs the wind shifted 180 degrees to the NE, and picked up to a steady 20 knots, with gusts to 25. This boat likes to be at a dock - there's no doubt in my mind - unless it's really calm out. At anchor she tracks back and forth, tugging and pulling at the rode like a racing horse trying to get out of the starting gate. [If anyone has any solutions to this, please let me know.] I was in and out of bed, and on deck twice between 0400 and 0500, hearing strange noises, checking on the rode, and on our position. Now I was in front of a whole bunch of boats, tugging at my anchor, without too much room to let out more rode. I decided it was too cold to stay up and worry about things, so crawled back in beside my personal heater (Sandra). After a couple of moans about how cold my body was, especially my feet and hands, we were both off in dreamland again.

At precisely 0520 hrs we both awoke to a slight thump noise. I thought my nice new hurricane lantern (anchor light) had fallen onto the deck but when I looked up I could see the transom of the small green boat out of the cabin window. We were dragging!! The solo sailor was hollering "Yo", "Yo" to try to wake me - little did he know that I was already finished pulling on my pants and boots - I knew this would take a while to sort and I wasn't going to start off in my underwear only to have to come back in. When I got on deck I was travelling downwind at about two knots, as if we were passing the small green boat in a narrow channel. Now, I thought, it's worse - the

rode has broken!

I leaned down to start the engine and of course, for the first time in ages, it didn't start first time. After a few tries I realized I didn't do the usual routine properly, get down to work the handles with two hands - full choke, a touch of throttle, vvvrooom - there she goes. When I came back up from starting the engine the boat was already starting to round up to weather again, the anchor having taken hold again somewhere beside or just in front of the little green boat. On with the deck lights, Sandra takes the helm, I go up front to bring in the anchor. Its going to be an extra early start to the day ! With our tails between our legs, more embarassed than hurt or damaged, we set out for Oriental.

Oriental was much nicer to us. We eventually got a spot at the town dock when the two couples on the two boats returned from Sunday church. We wandered over to Whittaker Creek and found a 10' section of used 3/8 anchor chain. Unfortunately, no used anchors - maybe Ray in the hardware store would have some, he's open tomorrow at around 0900. Walked by Triton Yachts, stopped in the M&M cafe and at the inflatable shop, and everyone said the same thing - maybe Ray in the hardware store would have some. Little did we know what a goldmine Ray's hardware would be: a 1995 3.3HP Yamaha outboard (in great shape) for \$300; a used 35lb CQR plow anchor for \$80; a small inverter for \$25; and a two burner propane stove for \$200. Almost our whole wish list checked off in one store - and at GREAT prices. When we finally left the dock at 1400 hrs on Monday, we were two happy campers - all this new stuff!!

We set the new anchor [named "Bill" after our friend back home] that night half way between Oriental and Beaufort. Met up with Pete, the guy who towed the schooner "Northern Spy" into Belhaven with us. He told us they had torn the engine apart and indeed the crankshaft was broken. Ouch! We managed to sail away from the rain and gales we experienced in the Delaware and Chesapeake, and found a bit of sunshine - but along with it came the cold. A record-setting low of 27 degrees last night had us using ALL the blankets on board - two sleeping bags under and a down comforter, two fleece blankets and a thick cotton throw on top. All this plus socks, underwear and t-shirts - and we were still a bit cold. Nothing like waking up to a quarter inch of frost all over the boat, plus fog so thick you couldn't see 100 feet. Needless to say, we slept in ('til 0715) with the security blanket of our new anchor and chain, and once the fog lifted head off for Beaufort. A great day but no breeze - 4 hours of motoring and we were here. A great little town with lots of sailing (even pirates) history. Maybe one day we'll have enough time to stay here for a week or so to really expore it.

Tomorrow we plan to head out around noon (tides are favourable then) - right after I send off this latest email update. Should be in South Carolina in about three days or so. Will update you further at the next stop.

Bye for now. Thanks to all who have sent along a greeting. Keep in touch.

Pete & Sandra aboard Canadian sailing vessel "Heeling Hands"



Date: Sat, 1 Nov 1997 13:35:22 -0500

Tom's River, NJ

Hi guys:

We're still alive, and into the Atlantic. This is our first try at a "group" message so I won't include too much in case it doesn't work.

We're in Tom's River, NJ - the birthplace of Frankly Scarlett (or at least where Jeff found the boat). The boat is in the Tom's River Yacht Club - the first club to offer free accomodation so far - every place we've been in charges between \$1 to \$1.60 per foot to tie up for the night. We're at a classmate's house (the dry and warmth is very welcome) while a gale blows through at 35-45 knots from the southeast, waves 9-12 feet!! Sandra and I are quite happy to wait this one out after having a bit of a harrowing ride past West Point Military Academy - a steady 40 with gusts to 55 following us down the Hudson River!! We were doing 6.5 knots under bare poles and the engine idling in gear. We were none too happy to stop that day too!

Next stop Atlantic City (~40 miles), and after that the Chessapeake. The weather is warming up already and should get a bit better near Annapolis.

Hope you are all doing well.

Cheers,

Pete & Sandra aboard Canadian yacht "heeling hands"

97-11-25

Charleston, South Carolina

Things are getting better ... warmer, stopped raining, and we seem to be putting some real distance under the keel. Its about time - we ARE in South Carolina!!

Forgot to mention it last letter - saw our first porpoises (dolphins) just before reaching Beaufort! It must be getting warmer!! Spent a couple of days in the Beaufort - Moorehead City area. Beaufort is a great little town with lots of maritime history, and Moorehead City is a bustling fishing and tourism city. Had a nice pint of Guinness in a local pub in Beaufort, and Sandra tried a tasty local bitter. First good pints since leaving New Jersey (at Marybeth's) [but not quite the same as those we had in Ireland a few years ago].

Had an exciting exit from Beaufort - as we left from the Town Creek Marina to head out into the main channel, we discovered that the buoys do not clearly demarcate the shoals. We throttled back to idle speed and took the boat out of gear, and I called back to the marina on the VHF to get some clear directions to avoid running aground. Just as the marina operator was telling me about the proper route, we heard a soft swooshing sound as the boat drifted aground onto a sandbank. With a little help (push) from our whisker pole and a passing sportfishing boat's wake, we backed clear off the shoal and headed out under the bridge - with only our prides bruised. Oh well - they say that if you don't run aground somewhere along the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), you're lying!! We saw lots of others hit hard - many needing to get towed off

by the local SeaTow service (probably at about \$50 to \$100 a pop). One guy ran aground in the gap, got towed in towards the marina where he dropped anchor, then had to get towed off again about four hours later as he was aground where he had anchored due to tide!!

From Moorehead City we headed south on the ICW just after dawn. Had planned to get 50-60 miles, and did, but got into the Swan Point Marina well after dark as we were help up for just over an hour outside the Camp Lejeune Military training area. They don't let boats pass while the cadets are learning how to use their guns!! Saw quite a few helicopters and planes overhead as we passed through this long stretch. One advantage was that we got to see two large owls sitting in the trees adjacent to the waterway just as the light was fading. Also, pelicans are starting to become abundant - both brown and white.

The following day it finally warmed up - temps into the mid-70's and finally able to remove some layers of fleece. Made it another 50 miles, in spite of 20 knot headwinds for most of the day, and currents that always seemed to shift against our favour at every inlet. Anchored in Carolina Beach (held well but were exposed to a strong breeze all night), tucked in behind a number of other boats who were having trouble holding their hooks. Two anchors definitely reduces the dancing this boat loves to do while at anchor, but when they both dig in well its quite a chore to bring them up without an anchor roller. I guess that will be the next big purchase.

From Carolina Beach we again left at dawn followed closely by two other larger boats. Caught the tides just right - followed the 2-3 knot ebb down the Cape Fear River, and just as we approached the inlet it shifted to a flood and helped push us down towards Myrtle Beach. As we approached, Sandra started to drool as she found out we would be tying up at a free dock behind an Outlet Mall!! Shopping was terrible (apparently), but we found a brew pub where the sampler glasses were free, and appetizers were half price! Needless to say we slept well that night. Next morning we tried to pull into another mall that we were told would be much better prices, but got very shallow and we bumped the bottom (mud) about 4 feet off the dock. Needless to say we couldn't go in and shop (I was heart broken - not!!).

Spent the next full day motoring, no chance to sail since the twists and turns in the channel would place us head to wind every few minutes. Stayed the night anchored off Georgetown. Some local shop keepers dropped off a welcome package describing the city and the shops, the tides/currents, and the history of the area - neat idea. Had a sundowner on "Suzanne" with Trish and Dan, a couple we had bumped into in Ray's hardware store in Oriental, NC. They are on there way south as well, and have done this every winter for the past seven years running. Yesterday we pushed on together with a combination of motoring with and without help from the genoa. Stopped early about 5 miles out of Charleston, with the plan to arrive in the marina early so we could have a full day in town. Had a great dinner together with them [Trish and Dan] - fresh local shrimp we picked up during the day mixed in with a garlicy pesto pasta - topped off with an apple cobbler type of dish that Trish whipped up in the pressure cooker - very tasty but not so visually appealing. Dan and I had a few laughs at that one, but we still ate two helpings each.

Pulled into Charleston today early as planned. Took me til 1330 to get so frustrated with the email that I gave up and went to the boat to make and install some aluminum backing plates for the primary winches. Its amazing how therapeutic a grinder can be!! It turns out that AOL cannot support the PPP protocol that Eudora uses - I've just been lucky to be able to receive

anything at all since we started. Its very frustrating knowing there are 58 messages waiting for us that we can't get to, and about 3 weeks worth of banking that we can't catch up on (we do this through the internet as well).

Hopefully you'll get this message when it all gets sorted out. I think I'll have to cave and phone long distance to Toronto to pick up these messages - and keep working with AOL to figure out how to make this connection work.

Bye for now,

Pete & Sandra aboard Canadian sailing vessel "Heeling Hands"



97-11-28

outside Beaufort, SC (this one is pronounced Bewfort, unlike the NC Bowfort)

Hello all:

Heard there was a big snow storm in Toronto ... pity. Thought I'd write to tell you all that its been warm and sunny - the only draw back is that now the bugs (mosquitos and no-see-ums) are out.

You should have figured out by now that the email connection is working again. Teresa back at the College bailed us out by having all the email sent to my cmcc email address bounced automatically to my AOL address (Thanks Teresa!). For now we get our email on AOL and send it through Eudora - seems a bit complicated. I'm sure it'll become more streamlined in time.

American Thanksgiving yesterday. Had a great Thanksgiving dinner in Beaufort last night at Emilie's restaurant. They have what they call their "orphan's dinner" for all the boating community (and others) who don't have friends or family to spend the holiday with. They put on a huge buffet with everything from the customary turkey with all the trimmings to smoked salmon, soft shelled crab, beef, ham, awesome sweet potatoe cobbler, mashed potatoes with turnips mixed in (mmm), salads, etc. And I ate the BEST pecan pie for dessert, Sandra had the chocolate cake, and we didn't get close (too full) to the fresh eclairs, pumkim pie or ice cream. All this for no cost!! In spite of all our great eating I've either lost some weight or my pants are stretching out. Must have been all the shivering in the Chesapeake!

Sandra found a Starbucks in Charleston and lounged over a latte and a paper in the morning before we left. Apparently its a great walk-around city with lots of nice old houses and friendly people (as well as a whole street full of her favorite clothing stores - too bad they were closed!). Left around 1300 to catch the 1330 bridge. Motored all afternoon in the sunshine and found a nice isolated anchorage at sundown (1730). Sandra was up in the middle of the night cause she heard a noise that turned out to be some crabbers pulling traps up along the creek we were in. While up to check this out she heard some other noise near the shore that she thought was

some kind of large animal. We were told we might see some alligators in these parts - YIKES! Woke up with the sun to get underway to Beaufort (Bewfort). Were finally able to put the genoa up crossing Coosaw River - the backing plates and newly greased winches worked great. It was nice to be able to sail again.

After leaving Beaufort we hoisted the sails again to push us through the tidal current in Port Royal Sound (and inlet to the ocean). Had breakfast underway. Passed by Hilton Head - huge houses, huge yachts in the basin, and gorgeous manicured landscaping on the properties. Followed a boat that had two couples on board that had no sailing experience. They bought the boat in Toronto, had it trucked to the Chesapeake, boarded and took off on their adventure to South America! NO experience, not even any charts and in a boat that draws 6 feet!! We saw them go aground three times on sand bars before I ribbed him about checking the accuracy of his depth sounder and offered to be his seeing eye dog by takin the lead. Got him into a marina for fuel where they we going to wait out the low tide.

Saw lots of dolphins, loons, eagles and cormorants today. Passed the River that goes up to Savannah, but didn't go up since it would be a 16 mile return trip - we're on a mission to get to Florida! Stopped for the night here in Redbird Creek afer a 70 mile day (new record).

Bye for now,

Pete & Sandra aboard Canadian sailing vessel "Heeling Hands"



97-12-04

St. Augustine, FL

Had quite the day leaving Redbird Creek in the fog as the sun was rising - quite pretty, but spooky. More large animal noises during the night, but still no actual sighting of alligators! No breeze, and fog got heavier as we approached the ocean inlets. Slowed right down to about 3 knots, and navigated by using a combination of GPS and depth soundings. Climbed up the mast to the top of the spinnaker pole ring and could see about a half mile visibility up there. From on deck we couldn't see the buoys until we were about 2 boat lengths away. One boat dropped an anchor in the middle of the channel to wait it out. Many other boats stayed at anchor to wait it out. Another Canadian boat and us were the only ones to be clever enough to get to the opposite shore, then follow the barely visible shoreline and depth readings up the creek 'til the fog cleared. At least we could still keep moving that way - we're on a mission to get to Florida.

Pulled into Frederica River off Fort Frederica at dusk. Restless night with gusty winds and strong rain. Left early to motor all day to Amelia Island, Florida - just under the Georgia border. Current was in our favour all day, and arrived around 1400. Finally in the Sunshine State!! Fueled up and went south another few miles after getting some shrimp to cook for dinner at a nearby shop. Met a couple (Frank and Audrey) from New Brunswick - she was from my Mum's

home town (Gagetown) - and had dinner with them (garlic shrimp and pasta primavera!).

Next day pulled into the Amelia Island Yacht Basin early to arrange for a car rental - had to get down to Fort Pierce for a meeting with a couple from the Cayman Islands (Paul and Nancy Layman). We're seeing if we can arrange a semi-regular locum at Dr. Layman's practice there - this could prove good as a break for not only us but them too. Had a great meeting over a marvelous dinner. Both really nice people and we seem to get along well - hope things work out. We'll probably try to get there for a visit in the spring sometime to check out the practice before firming up a locum time.

Stayed in a motel that night and drove back to Amelia Island in the morning. Pre-arranged mail drop wasn't there yet, so Sandra arranged to have it forwarded to our next stop in Titusville. Left late from Amelia Island, but still put in 15 miles. Stopped at dusk at an anchorage off of Fort George, and then up at 0700 (sleep in) to get to St. Augustine. Arrived early, around 1400, with a combination of current, motor and genoa powering us. Met up again with Frank and Audrey for dessert ashore after I spent the afternoon refurbishing the head and Sandra walking around to check things out shore-side. Warmer and fewer no-see-ums - its nice to be in warmer climes now.

Cheers,

Pete & Sandra aboard Canadian sailing vessel "Heeling Hands"



97-12-08

Titusville, FL

Hi Gang:

Things are supposed to be warm south of Daytona (so we were told), but we've had another cold spell down here, getting close to freezing at night and only into the forties during the day. Have heard there has been lots of snow and cold up north, so we're definitely not looking for any pity from you!! Overall, things have been easier though - the clear days and dry sailing defintiely help the spirits.

Left St. Augustine the next day after having a wander through town in the morning. Incredible architecture in some of the older buildings - lots of history as St. Augustine is the oldest city in the states (founded somewhere in the late 1500's and occupied by the Spanish, French, British and Americans). Found "Sailor's Exchange", a place not where you can exchange you sailing companions but one where you get new and used gear for real cheap prices. Found some small items but no bow rollers. Will definitely need a roller before going across as lifting "Bill" (our 35lb anchor) can be difficult at times, especially since its attached to 70' of 3/8 chain!

Found a couple of nice anchorages between St. Augustine and Titusville - the first we pulled in to very late (about 8pm), well after dark, into the most crowed basin we've been in to date (figures). But, since we only draw 3' 9", we idled inside past everyone and anchored in 6' of water with lots of rom around us. It was quite spectacular since there were TONS of schools of fish jumping all around the boat - must have been something bigger chasing them from

beneath.

We up before dawn and out of the anchorage, probably before many even knew we had been there. Made it down to an anchorage just south of New Smyrna Beach (about 30 miles north of Titusville) after doddling a bit in Daytona at the West Marine store and another Sailors' Surplus place (again no good used bow rollers yet). Were into the anchorage around 1600, early for us!! Changed the oil, made dinner and watched and listened to the dolphins and pelicans playing around the boat all evening.

Made it into Titusville around noon the next day, and have stayed in the Marina here for the past two nights - got a great rate for being BoatUS members (the maritime equivalent to CAA). Got the two cruising water tanks cleaned out and plumbed, so we should be set to carry about 100 gallons of water into the Bahamas. Also got a battery problem fixed, which turned out to be caused by a corroded cable between the positive terminal and the main switch. Have also cleaned and aired out the boat, and restocked with some shopping. Met some two very nice couples here, one from Maine and the other from Texas, who we've had dinner with and spent time together with. Cathy (from Maine) has a bad back that Sandra has been working on for the past few days - hopefully she can help a little.

I will finally send these messages off - I hear there is a connection here I can use. I don't think you've received anything from us since Charleston, so you should have lots of reading now to catch you up for awhile.

Thanks to all who have sent individual messages. We'll try to get these answered soon.

Cheers,

Pete & Sandra aboard Canadian sailing vessel "Heeling Hands"

97-12-20

- Leaving the USA

Thought we should write to let everyone know we are still alive and healthy and enjoying ourselves, and planning to leave Florida tomorrow morning for the Bahamas.

We have been here in Vero Beach for 7 nights (arrived last Sunday) after spending 3 nights in Titusville and 4 nights in Cocoa. Survived yet another record-breaking weather event - this time record rainfall for 4 days straight while in Cocoa!!

Have spent these last two weeks preparing the boat for the trip and awaiting a favourable weather window to cross the Gulf Stream. Purchased a bimini, a large solar panel, and (yes, finally) an anchor roller (will install it after we cross since we have to take off the forestay to do this). We even

finally got the name put on!! Have also provisioned, which included about four bus trips to the Walmart superstore for various supplies - best prices around!! (couldn't carry it all in one trip - life is much different without a car for shopping).

Hope everyone is well and enjoying the holiday season. Even though there is no snow or icicles down here, there's plenty of festive atmosphere.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Pete & Sandra
aboard Canadian sailing vessel "Heeling Hands"

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Bahamas!



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97-12-22

- Gulf Stream!

Yesterday we left Vero Beach at 0800. We were travelling with another boat, "Gone with the Wind", a Baba 35 with Stan and Cathy aboard. This is the couple we have been travelling with since we met them in Titusville. The breeze was light, from the east, and there had been no northerly component to the wind for the past two days. Although west would have been better, at least there was no north. The northerly component is important to eliminate, since this is what will create the "elephants" or "condominiums", as the huge waves are called that build when the north (southward) breezes meet the northward current of the Gulf Stream.

We planned to head south to the Lake Worth inlet on the outside (ie. the ocean, not the ICW), and from there make a decision to cross or duck into the inlet in case the weather changed on us during the day. This plan should have us at the inlet by 1900 or 2000 hours. The crossing is estimated to take about 12 to 14 hours, which would place us off Grand Bahama in the morning, so we could choose between landing in West End or Port Lucaya.

Travelling down from Vero Beach to Lake Worth took about 12 hours. We left the Intracoastal at Fort Pierce and headed out about 1 mile offshore. It was very interesting getting out of this Inlet against the tide, with 3-4 foot waves and dodging the 30-40 fishing boats in the mouth of the harbour. The wind built a bit to about 15-20 knots from the east, with seas about 2-3 feet. We sailed almost the whole way, taking the genoa down as the wind veered ahead of the beam (trying to adapt to true cruisers style!). Since the waves were abeam, the ride was a little lumpy so we tried not to go down below (or as little as possible, anyway) to avoid the "green meanies". We had two strikes on the fishing line, both spanish mackerel, one that I got within 6 feet of the boat before it shook the line. The other fish we managed to land, but it wasn't very difficult since some other bigger fish had come along and chomped off its entire body before we landed it, leaving us only the fish head attached to the lure!!

We arrived at the Lake Worth inlet sea buoy at 2000 exactly. Since the weather had not changed much, and the wind was forecast to swing to the southeast (which would be a bit better), we hung a left to a course heading of 130 degrees. This heading allowed for the set of the current, and would place us directly at West End. Within minutes we realized we couldn't maintain this heading. The wind was too far east, directly in our faces, and the mainsail was luffing too wildly. I wasn't keen to take the main down and motor the whole way, so Stan and I agreed to carry a heading of 140 degrees and motorsail. Off we headed across the Gulf Stream, pitch dark, wind on the nose at about 20 knots, and seas roly at between 3-5 feet.

The seas remained lumpy all night. The waves were only about 5 feet but seemed to be very disorganized. There probably were still some small north swells remaining from a few days ago. It was interesting watching "Gone with the Wind" bounce around in the waves, forward and backward and side to

side. We saw the top of their keel on several occasions as they bobbed over the heading waves. Their boat is heavier and designed to be more of an ocean passagemaker than ours. With our shallow draft I'm sure we were bouncing around twice as much. We decided to put up our genoa to smooth things out, but of course as a result our heading was now between 140 and 150 degrees. Smoother going, and faster, but of course now more waves and spray over the deck, and going in the wrong direction. When was the southeast breeze coming?!

Gone with the Wind stayed off our aft quarter, main only up, bobbing around. Cathy was feeling a little green when we left Vero Beach in the morning and when we called over to check on them around 2200, Stan informed us that within an hour of leaving the sea buoy Cathy was laying flat on the floor of the boat throwing up. She was out of commission for the rest of the night and Stan was left to single hand their boat the whole way. We offered to go back, but they wanted to press on and get it over with.

The winds built a bit during the night. We both slept a bit in the lee side of the cockpit under the dodger (protected from the spray). It was quite beautiful under the stars (when they would come out from beneath the odd cloudy patches), but it was fitful, lasting probably only for about an hour at a time (except for Sandra's two hour crash later on!!) With our course heading, we were battling both the Gulf Stream and the winds, which meant crawling along at a snail's pace of 2-4 knots over ground. It seemed we would never get there!

It was relatively uneventful until the winds picked up about 0300. We had a couple of squalls (yes, rain accompanying) with gusts to 35 mph, and at about 0300 we reefed the main and shortened the genoa down to its second slab. Just as we finished reefing, got the sails working and turned the engine off, our running lights shorted out and we were sailing in the dark. Within seconds, we heard a loud noise of something falling on the deck, and looked around to find the starboard spreader light had fallen onto the deck (and was still there!!)!! While trying to sort all this out we accidentally backwinded the jib, and did two quick circles before being able to get back under control again. Fastest 720 penalty spins I've ever done on a big boat!! Stan, of course, was following our lights before all this happened. When we finally recovered from our circles, we looked back to see Gone with the Wind bearing on to us with speed. All we could do was watch and try to steer away, but without having much way on, we couldn't manoeuvre very quickly. They got within one boatlength before Stan could see where we were and alter his course. Those bowsprits look a lot bigger when they are coming at you at ramming speed!! We called him on the radio, told him about the situation with the lights, and advised we would run with our anchor light on (at the masthead) for at least some visibility.

Eventually the darkness faded and the sun began to rise. We were well south of where we were supposed to be, and had to make a decision of where to land. We turned towards Bimini and checked our speed and GPS- estimated ETA. Then we tacked and pointed towards West End and did the same. Turns out that although Bimini was closer, with the Gulf Stream and waves, it would take us another 14 hours to get there. West End was about 5 hours away, and on the new tack the seas were easier on us. We put out the fishing line again and headed northeast, enjoying the beautiful emerging day after a long, hard, lumpy night.

Bahamas!

Gone with the Wind had their share of problems too. The shackle for their traveller separated, causing the boom to flop around madly until they could jury-rig it under control. They also lost their port-side running light, lost their staysail halyard up the mast, and had one of their diesel jerry cans spring a leak on deck. Nobody ever said crossing the Gulf Stream was supposed to be easy!!

Around 1000 we heard a loud spinning - FISH ON!! It figures this would happen when Sandra finally got up enough nerve to go in and use the head. We landed a 3-4 pound Mahi-Mahi (dolphin fish), which gave us a beautiful show as it jumped, and was very pretty with bright stripes of yellow, green and blue. It made a great celebratory dinner for all four of us that night, bar-b-qed in foil with lemon, butter and dill.

Well, we're here in the Bahamas, safe and sound. Arrived in time for Christmas, as planned. Tomorrow we'll go around to Port Lucaya and catch a boat to Nassau to join my Mum and sister who will be there from the 22nd to the 29th.

Merry Christmas to all,

Pete & Sandra
aboard Canadian sailing vessel "Heeling Hands"



From: Heeling97@aol.com <Heeling97@aol.com>

Subject: The Bahamian way of life

Date: Sunday, February 01, 1998 2:06 PM

98-01-16

Happy New Year to all of our friends and families abroad. As you have likely been able to guess, accessing email from the Bahamas is not as simple as in the US or Canada. The last effort cost us over \$65 US, the result being that we could send and receive our email, but were unable to do our banking (which was the REAL reason for connecting after all). Another \$6 (2 minute) call to our banker helped to solve that one!! The Bahamian way of calling Canada or the US (unless you have a direct line) is to connect to an operator first, who then makes the call to North America. Of course this doesn't work very well with a computer and modem, and our access has been severely restricted as a result!!

We last left you at West End, after our experience of crossing the Gulf Stream. The next day, we had a four hour motor sail here to Lucaya (adjacent to Freeport), where we left the boat at anchor buddied up to Stan and Cathy's Gone with the Wind. They kindly boat sat while we travelled to Nassau for Christmas. We were in a big hurry to get here by at least 3pm since the mailboat to Nassau was to leave at 5pm. We have since learned (the hard way) that 5pm means they start loading people around 5, and the boat actually left at about 6:30pm! The Bahamian way of life is very casual, and things happen

IN time, but rarely ON time.

The ride on the mailboat (the Marcella III) was an experience in itself. For \$40 each (compared to \$65 for a flight) we got to spend 10 hours on the outside top deck of this small freighter. We weren't fortunate enough to get a berth inside, and the other small inside room was occupied by a bunch of guys smoking, drinking, and playing dominoes (not a place for the two tourists). At least we were able to get the one chair that was up there, and surround ourselves with cardboard to block the wind. That lasted 'til about 3am when we moved down and back to near the generator to try to keep warm. Aside from carrying about 50-100 people, we saw them load about 20 pallets of "stuff", 5 cars below decks in the hold, and another two on top lashed on to the top of the deck. I stumbled on to a small porthole near the crews quarters through which meals were being passed through. Warm peas and rice, corn and some kind of meat (we think it was pork and are praying it wasn't pigs feet!!) was a welcome treat in the middle of a cold night. In retrospect, it was an experience we were glad to have, but we were quite pleased to catch a flight instead of a boat ride back!!

We arrived in Nassau on the island of New Providence at around 5am, and walked about a mile to the hotel my sister (Pam) and Mum were staying in. The staff at the front desk knew who we were when we came in, as Pam had notified them of our impending arrival. They were both awake, and had Dunkin Donuts coffee waiting for us (Sandra was VERY happy with this!!). We had a great time in Nassau over Christmas. Unfortunately Mum had sprained her ankle as they were leaving Pam's house to go to the airport, so she couldn't keep up her normal walking pace. In spite of this, however, we still managed to get to the beach every day, swim, walk the market and Bay Street, and go out for dinner every night.

Aside from seeing Mum and Pam again and spending Christmas with some family, the highlight of the trip to Nassau was to see the Junkanoo, a traditional celebration of life the Bahamians have followed for years. It was a huge parade that started at 1am and finished at 8am (Bahamian time), which meant it started at 3:30am and finished around 10am. The colorful costumes and intoxicating music were a feast for the eyes and ears. The largest group (and the winners) in the parade were The Saxons, one rumour had them numbering about 1100 strong! Drums, horns, whistles and dancing created an electric atmosphere which will likely bring us back some day to see again. On an island (New Providence) of about 250,000 people, there were apparently about 60-85,000 people out on the streets watching and participating in the festivities. It was also televised and broadcast live as well the next day.

We arrived back in Freeport/Lucaya on the 28th, a day ahead of schedule (what a concept - being early). Stan and Cathy had had an interesting time looking after the boats, nearly bumping onto the wall of the shoreline during one front that had come through a few days earlier. But all was safe and sound, and no damage was done. We were glad to be back on the boat - we even missed it - as we had not been away from her overnight since visiting friends in New Jersey. We started back into the routine of boat preparation and maintenance, and got ready for the arrival of our first set of guests from Toronto - Bill and Christina. We went in to Freeport by bus on New Year's eve, and got a big steak to barbeque for dinner. Had our dinner with a nice bottle of "Old Block" Shiraz that I had picked up in Adelaide during a business trip in October '96. And we finally drank that bottle of champagne that we have had

lying around for years. A very successful New Year's eve meal, shared with good friends, in the islands like we had planned, and in a protected anchorage under a starlit sky. Cheers to many more of these ahead.

Bill and Christina arrived in Lucaya on January 9th. Their first week was in a hotel in town, the second was with us on the boat. Our plan was to have them sail with us to a group of islands east of here called the Abacos. When they arrived on the boat on Saturday I had still not finished putting the new bow roller on (which was a stainless plate incorporating a whole new stem fitting to attach the forestay). Tools were everywhere, and we weren't going anywhere without the forestay attached (not without the mast falling down anyway!). Stan and Cathy came in to the marina (the Lucayan Village Marina - an excellent world class facility, by the way) with us Saturday morning, and it was all Stan could do to get the boat there as he had been up all night being sick to his stomach. While he slept all day Saturday, Bill and I finished putting the stem fitting on, Sandra and Christina got the last minute provisioning and laundry done, while Cathy prepared Gone with the Wind for the departure. Sunday morning Bill and I bolted on the fitting and when we checked on Stan, he had developed flank pain and wasn't passing any water. Sounded like a kidney stone to Sandra and I. We hung around the dock, got some more work done on the boat, and waited as long as we could before going back to anchor out.

A week later now, the day before Bill and Christina leave, and we are back in the marina again, with plans to leave to the Abacos tomorrow morning. The favorable weather window from last Sunday rapidly diminished on Monday, as did Stan's condition. By Monday afternoon it was clear he was in the process of shedding a stone - the pain bouncing from flank to bladder to flank as it seemed to roll up and down the ureter. Stan went on antibiotics on Tuesday - while we went for a short seven mile sail to nearby Peterson Cay. What was supposed to be a leisurely overnight trip ended up being a bumpy motorsail there, with Christina getting seasick and Bill feeling a little green. The anchorage was a little rough (lots of rolling in the swell), and they slept in the cockpit to avoid coming down below and feeling ill again. We were up early, and went straight to the beach to escape the swell. Had a brief snorkel (including seeing a HUGE manta ray and barracuda) before heading back to Lucaya. On the way back, Bill and Christina were again not of sorts, but at least the trip was shorter. Sandra and I enjoyed the off the wind sail home, and we pulled in to our "home" beside Gone with the Wind. Stan was still not better, and while we spent the next two days at the beach, they spent Thursday in the hospital in Freeport getting checked over. Six hours later, an xray, blood and urine tests completed, and \$110 lighter, they came back from the hospital with the information that he was probably passing a stone, he should stay on the antibiotics, and keep drinking lots of fluid. Miraculously, the tests were therapeutic, as Stan woke up this morning feeling better with no flank or bladder pain (Oh the power of a thorough exam and tests!! - NOT!!).

We will try to send this message off through a friend's boat phone (a 72' boat!) down the dock from us. We hope all is well back home (wherever you are), and that every one is well. We are looking forward to updating you next from the Abacos - there we will have our next set of visitors, Jacques and Janet.

Bye for now,



Subject: across the Lesser Bahama Bank

Date: Sunday, February 01, 1998 2:08 PM

98-01-21

Over the last four days we sailed from Port Lucaya, Grand Bahama to Marsh Harbour, Abaco. This was the most beautiful and enjoyable leg of the journey:

We left Lucaya Saturday morning as planned (0930), shortly after Bill and Christine caught their cab to the airport. We were sorry to see them go, but at the same time glad to be on the move to more clear waters. The winds were (as usual) right on the nose (NW) at between 15-22 knots, so we put up the main with one reef in it and motor-sailed towards West End. Put the rod out, hoping to catch another Mahi-Mahi, but no fish tales this time! The going was slow, averaging about 4 to 4.5 knots, because of the moderate chop (2-4 foot) on the water. Arrived at Indian Cay (pronounced "key") Rock at about 1600.

Unfortunately, with the tide just an hour short of being at its lowest, it turned out to be "skinny" water for Stan and Cathy, who bounced a couple of times off the bottom as we passed through the narrow channel between the reefs. No damage done though (although it scared Cathy pretty bad), as most of the bouncing was on sand. The current was coming off the Bank, and the wind was blowing onto it, making for some nice (NOT!) standing waves at the entrance to the cut. We could see waves breaking on the reefs on either side of us as we rolled through, Sandra on the bow to spot rocks or reef and point the direction through, and me on the helm with my eyes closed.

As soon as we made it through the reef, the sea flattened right down, which we were extremely grateful for since we were going to anchor just inside. We put the anchor down and set the hook in about 6.5 feet of water. Gone with the Wind draws close to 6 feet, so Stan and Cathy had to root about a bit to find a spot to set their anchor. Finally they found a place deep enough, but their anchor didn't set properly. Not a nice end to a rather rough day. They finally got settled in though, and we watched the sun set to the west with a beautiful clear sky with lots of stars above us.

Night time at anchor out in the middle of nowhere, with no protection from the wind or the sea, is a new experience for both of us. And, of course, on our first experience with this, the wind and sea Gods made it a point to not let us take it lightly. The wind shifted to the northwest at around 2200 and built a little such that it was blowing between 18-22 knots all night. The noise of all that, plus the extreme rolling of the boat (since the current had us pointing sideways to the waves) made for a very uncomfortable sleep.

But, we survived that bit of discomfort and awoke at 0600 to see a spectacular sunrise. Another clear day, with the winds from the northwest at 15-20 knots. Not the best angle for the breeze for the first part of this leg, but better than if it were straight north. Although we would have loved to have left early, we had to wait to leave. It wasn't until about 0800 that we could distinguish the colours properly through the water to tell the deep parts from the shallow parts. This is kind of important when crossing shoaling waters!

By 0900 we were through the shallowest part of the cut, past Barracuda Shoal, and under sail (reefed main and shortened genoa - no motor) on a close reach towards Mangrove Cay. The sky was clear and sunny, and at around 1000 it started to really warm up. By 1030 we shook the reef out of the main, and by 1100 had the full genoa out. The breeze finally died off the less than 8 knots near noon and we were forced to put the motor on again in order to hit Great Sale Cay before dark. Again no fish all day, but at least we tried.

Great Sale Cay is a beautiful wide bay which is completely protected except to breezes from the southwest. We dropped anchor well inside the five other boats that were there and Sandra and I toasted our successful crossing of the Bank with the last of our cold beer (ice only last 3 days max in the heat). We talked about how nice it was to finally be able to sail (even though it was short-lived, and how beautiful the day was and how great it was to be in this protected anchorage surrounded by clear blue water. We could see the bottom clearly from the deck, and I watched the occasional fish swim by as I took the dinghy out to check on the set of the anchor. I have often put my mask and snorkel on to dive down and check the set of the hook, but the water was SO clear (only 8 feet of water) that you could check on it from above here without difficulty.

Stan and Cathy had us over for dinner on their boat - a macaroni dish with beef, tomato, green pepper and onion - and told us of their newly revised plans to return to the States in the Spring. Apparently the combination of bouncing over the shallows at Indian Cay Rock and the uncomfortable night at anchor really freaked Cathy, and made them realize that a circumnavigation (or any further extended cruising) were not going to be in the cards for them. Really a shame since they spent the past 6 years of their lives preparing their very capable boat for this journey. In hindsight (and from an observers point of view) it emphasizes how important it is to prepare yourselves (ie. both emotionally and with as much boat time experience as you can muster) in addition to preparing your vessel.

When we retruned to our boat after dinner we stood outside on the deck for awhile and watched what seemed like hundreds of fish swim near the boat as they were attracted to the bright anchor light we had left on. We saw what looked like a leaf float across the top of the water, but when it turned and circled the boat we knew it must be alive! With help from a flashlight we discovered it was a crab that had an air bubble trapped under its abdomen, allowing it to float, using its legs to "swim" across the water. As soon as Sandra hit it with the beam of light it stopped, tipped backwards a bit, and sunk under the water with pincers poised to protect itself. Definitely a sight we will remember for awhile.

The next day we were going to be pressed to make it the 56 miles to Green Turtle Cay. We had to get there early enough to be sure Gone with the Wind would have enough water (before low tide) to get in to the anchorage. We lifted anchor at 0645 and headed out just before daybreak, following three other boats who had pulled their anchors a bit earlier and were heading in the same direction. It started off calm, filled from the South (close hauled again!), and then backed to the Southwest early in the afternoon. We had our best sail of the trip, alternating between full sails and a reefed main with shortened genoa as the wind rose above 18 knots. The sea was flat, as Great Abaco Island was only 100-200 meters off to starboard, so we were sailing in

Bahamas!

near perfect conditions. With a little help from tidal current, we averaged about 6.5 knots for the day, and even hit 8.9 knots as the fastest puff of the day (as measured by GPS). Got into Green Turtle Cay at about 1530 - nearly two hours ahead of our planned time - a total of just over 110 miles in the past two days!!

One more day to Marsh Harbour, just over 20 miles. After a restful night at anchor in Green Turtle (no we didn't see any turtles there - although we did see three rays [one of which was a stingray] in the entrance to the channel). We left around 1030, near high tide, and sailed down the Sea of Abaco to Whale Cay Passage. There we went out into the Atlantic for a brief stretch (2-3 miles) to avoid a shallow bar that extends across the Sea of Abaco between Whale Cay and Great Abaco. We entered back in just north of Great Guana Cay, which has beautiful white sandy beaches and crystal clear turquoise waters. A broad reach down to Marsh Harbour from there, and we were in our new home by 1530. Filled with fuel (\$2.85 per gallon!), gave the boat a quick spray down with fresh water (no charge) and back out to drop the anchor.

We'll rest and recuperate here for the next few days before Jacques and Janet, who are friends of ours who sail "Gamache" (a Shark) in the same sailing club as us in Toronto (Toronto Sailing and Canoe Club), come down on Saturday. If we have half as good a time sailing with them next week as we have had this week we'll be extremely happy.

Low to mid 60's at night, low to mid 70's in the day. Clear sky, breezy (15-22 knots) from the NW slowly clocking to the SW as a front approaches. Should be some rain in the next day or two, but clear and warmer after that.

Bye for now,

Pete & Sandra
aboard Canadian sailing vessel "Heeling Hands"



beach1.jpg (34621 bytes)

Pete and Sandra with Jacques and Janet - On the Beach!

From: Heeling97@aol.com

Date: Fri, 6 Feb 1998 09:22:44 EST

98-02-05

Hello everyone!

We are still in Marsh Harbour, in the same slip where we left Jacques and Janet off last Saturday (see photo above). I'm VERY happy we spent a little bit of extra effort getting the boat stern-to into the slip - I'll explain ...

Sunday was nice, but the forecast wasn't good for Monday so we stayed another day. Good thing, cause it blew up good Sunday night (with gusts to 60 knots in the harbour, 48 on my wind speed instruments at the dock!). I was up and down most of the night just cause there was so much wind noise. Monday it was windy all day, and the same Monday night. Tuesday the wind died off for a few hours in the late morning, then following the tapering, it clocked and the wind and rain came in. Wednesday morning early (6:40am I was on deck) it picked up again, this time from the mouth of the harbour, and with just as much or more force. The skys were clear, and it was a bit cool (only low 70's as a high), but it seemed colder because of the breeze: all day we were looking at the instruments and seeing nothing less than 35, with occasional gust to 50. I've never seen it blow so hard for so long. Boats at anchor

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were dragging, and there were whitecaps between the docks!! We were bouncing in 2-3 foot chop tied to the dock!! Were we ever glad to be tied up between pilings (with every line doubled on the windward side - one boat we know had 15 lines on his boat!!), with the boat facing into the wind (the wind was just off the port bow).

The \$15 per night docking fee is good insurance in a blow like that. I'm not convinced my ground tackle would hold us in that kind of wind and sea: our primary is a 35lb CQR with 75' of 3/8 chain and 150' of 1/2" rode, our secondary is a 22lb Danforth with 35' of 3/8 chain and 150' of 1/2" rode, and our storm anchor is a 40lb Fisherman with every other bit of chain, weight and line I have on the boat tied to it (probably about 300 feet).

Tonight the wind has died off almost completely, and its actually cold out (low 50s - may have to put pants on tomorrow instead of shorts!!). But we've been warned not to let that fool us, 'cause another front is moving this way from the Gulf of Mexico. This one is supposed to be even stronger than the other two, and its path may be a bit further south than the others, bringing its centre closer to us (maybe within 50 miles). All week we've seen gale warnings here... this one may bring storm warnings (winds from 50 to 70 knots). So much for going to Man-O-War Cay for the fair on Saturday!!

Well, I'm too tired to stay up much longer so I'll quit here. I guess I did too much work today... fixed the leak in the dinghy, put new lugs on all the battery cables, repaired the battery charger (all it ended up being was a blown fuse), got the AC hot water heater working, fixed the head (again, but thank God it was just tightening the packing on the pump handle this time), and walked to the hardware store twice. All this between three glorious meals. I haven't expounded on any of our new taste sensations lately so here goes: oatmeal with fresh coconut mixed into it (plus toast and coffee of course) for breakfast; cracked conch - pronounced "konk" (batter dipped, deep fried conch) - served with peas and rice, macaroni and cheese, and potato salad for lunch (prepared, served and sold by Edna and Mervin out of the back of their station wagon); and dinner on Gone with the Wind with Stan and Cathy, BBQ pork, mashed potatoes and Sandra's special nutmeg squash (prepared in the pressure cooker, of course!), served with an ice cold Kalik beer (Bahamian beer).

Sandra crashed about an hour ago - probably exhausted from her heavy "girls day out" day - lunch at Mango's restaurant at noon followed by tea aboard "Harmony" at 1:30. We both send our best to everyone - we're having a great time (in spite of the weather), meeting lots of interesting people, and loving the fact that we chose to do this when we did. Now if only we can find a way to make the money last forever...

Cheers,

Pete and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands

Sent: Friday, May 01, 1998 11:46 AM

Subject: Peter and Sandra's great adventure

98-05-01

Well its about time I wrote again, isn't it!

We're still alive and well, and thoroughly enjoying our new life aboard. Now if only we could make it last longer...A long time has passed since our last group message was sent. When looking back, I see it was at the beginning of February.

Since we last wrote we spent a few more weeks enjoying the weather and wind in the Abacos. Jacques and Janet Michaud (other Shark sailors from Toronto aka Gamache) joined us there and got introduced to some of the joys of cruising during their week's respite: rain, dragging anchor, rum drinks (Little Janet Runabout), sailing, beach walks, snorkelling and walks, not to mention the great meals we had together.

A short time after they left, Alfred and Sabine (more Shark sailors from Germany!) joined us and we took off as soon as weather permitted. Together we travelled south from Marsh Harbour to Little Harbour, waited a few more days there for weather again, then made the passage across the western border of the Atlantic to Eleuthra (about 55 miles). After a few days working our way south through the western side of Eleuthra we crossed Exuma Sound and entered the Exuma island chain. Even caught a 6 lb tuna just as we left off the banks. Once into the Exumas, we continued to work south (dropping Alfred and Sabine off in Staniel Cay to catch a flight back to Florida) through the cays and eventually made it to George Town. Hard to believe that was about 6 weeks ago!

Jim Barkman and Jackie Soorsma (aka Silver Phantom - more Shark sailors!) joined us in George Town and helped us bring "Heeling Hands" to victory in our class in the Elizabeth Harbour Race during the Cruising Regatta. Finished 3rd overall in the fleet, missing 1st by only 14 seconds! We didn't fair so well in the 'Round Stocking Island Race.

Unfortunately the weather here in George Town in March and April wasn't really that much better for cruising than it was in the Abacos. Lots of high winds and high seas, which would have meant an uncomfortable ride to leave Elizabeth Harbour for anywhere. That meant that Jim and Jackie, and following them Sandra's brother Joe and his wife Dee, all had to be content puttering around the George Town area during their visits. Even at that, I think its still nice to swim, snorkel, walk, talk and eat great meals with good friends in a great environment like George Town. I don't even think Joe minded swimming with that big barracuda, although I'm not sure his heart has slowed down yet!! There is quite a cruising community here, with over 450 boats here during the Cruising Regatta (only 20 of which raced)!

About a week or so after the Cruising Regatta, the wind dropped and shifted, and we took the opportunity to go south to the Jumentos. It was gorgeous there, no other boats except for our little flotilla of five. We had great sailing - wind never ahead of the beam except once for a short beat one day coming back up. We were even inducted into the catamaran fleet (we were travelling with 3 PDQ 36's and an Islander 42), since we were able to keep up, and able to anchor in just as shallow a water as they could! When travelling with them, they like to say we aren't travelling on a monohull, but rather on a unimaran!!! My usual digs about how I prefer to sail a boat who's most stable position is not upside down is answered with a statement about how the most stable position for a monohull is on the bottom! Good fun for all.

We arrived back in George Town, Exuma, just in time for the National Family Island Regatta - where traditional Bahamian sloops race for coveted trophies (and prize money). I was lucky enough to be asked to sail on one of the B class boats (a bit smaller than the A class), and had a great 4 days of sailing, finishing 2nd overall, missing first by only one point. The same owner wants me to sail with him in Long Island at the end of May, which we will probably do. I also got to race on one of the A class boats, and between the 2 boats over four days my butt was pretty tender from hiking out on the pry all day! Sandra thinks she got some great pictures of these overcanvassed beasts working their way around the course - we'll see if they turn out when we get somewhere they can be developed.

We're now anchored just off George Town again, doing some chores on the boat, hanging out with more great people we have met here, and preparing for some more friends to come and visit. Hopefully the weather will hold.

Sandra is back to Toronto this week to do the taxes (its almost a swear word around here!), arrange our insurance, and other such things, so I've been left with the task of getting the new email list put together to send messages out again. I'll go back through the log and provide you all with a little more detail on our adventures over the past 3

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months so you'll get a feel about what life has been like.

Until then, thank-you to all you keep us informed of all "the news" back on the home front. I haven't responded to everyone who has written, but we do appreciate being thought of from so far away.

Fair winds,

Peter and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands

Sent: Monday, May 25, 1998 2:48 PM

Subject: Fishing and star-gazing

98-05-17

Hello all:

Thought I should write now, 'cause if I wait 'til I get back and review the log for the past 3 months I'll never get anything sent out at all.

Sandra's trip back to Toronto was successful in that the taxes got done! At least we're not IRS fugitives!! Being back in Toronto amongst the fast-paced lifestyle, however, reminded her (and reinforced) that our decision to "bail out" and start cruising was one of the best we have ever made. We both absolutely love life aboard and are trying to come up with ways now to make this last longer.

This week's episode may give you a hint of why we enjoy this lifestyle so much...

Yesterday (still in George Town), two friends I had just met and myself decided to go out spear fishing. They were invited to some sort of Japanese dinner party, and wanted to get some crab to make up a special dish. They were after Spider Crab, which is an algae-eating crab that lives on the reefs around here. These crab are shaped much like an Alaskan King Crab, but of course much smaller (and apparently much sweeter), but the claw ends (pincers) only meet at the tips, not in the middle (so there's not as much chance for your finger to get caught!). We left around noon in Monty's BIG inflatable - a 19' Nautica with an inboard diesel engine and a large centre console (guages, nav lights, VHF and GPS) - a great boat to travel in since there was lots of room for us and all the gear (masks, fins, snorkels, spears, buckets and water bottles), and it still will go about 30 mph full out!!

After about an hour, we arrived in the general area where we wanted to be (no landmarks, just GPS waypoints to help us find the way). The first sets of reef were small patch reefs just south of an area they call The Ferry, which separates Great Exuma from Little Exuma. You travel along in the boat over about 5-6 feet of sand until you see a dark patch. You stop there, jump over the side, and check out the bottom to see if its any good. Usually the dark patch is mostly grass, but sometimes there is a small cluster of coral or rock - the tasty creatures hang out around these. The fish (LOTS of grouper) try to hide in the crevices and holes, and the crab can be found by looking up from near the bottom up into the ledges above. Steve, who used to be a dive master at one of the dive shops in George Town, was incredibly knowledgeable about reef ecology and reef creatures' behaviours. Within minutes he had the first crab up into the boat, and showed me how to grab them by hand (yes, we wear gloves!). My first opportunity came a

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few minutes later - the crab was too far buried under the ledge to get by hand, but I could see him well enough to get a shot at the body so I tried to get it with my pole spear. Its supposed to be easy - just aim and shoot - but for some reason I missed (even though he wasn't moving). When the spear glanced off the rock beside the crab, it scared him and he went further back into the hole. I went to the surface to get some more air, and called Steve over to see if he could help get this guy, but no luck, even he couldn't get back in that far. Oh well, can't get them all!! I settled on a nice 5 lb grouper, since all the crab was going to Monty and Steve, and I had promised Sandra and another couple (Bob and Gwen on Rockhopper) I would bring back some fresh fish for dinner.

The second set of reefs were three long stretches of coral, again in the middle of nowhere. Thank God for GPS waypoints!! We did what is called a drift dive along these ledges, as the current and breeze were fairly strong. One guy would stay in the boat and the other two would go in and swim with the current. If something was caught, the guy driving would bring the boat over and put it in the bucket, so the divers didn't even need to get out of the water! We took turns staying with the boat, so that way everyone had a chance to get wet. At the start we were swimming in a school of about 20 barracuda - quite an overwhelming site - and even Steve was reluctant to spear anything amongst them! We also saw lots of other interesting stuff, including some incredible coral formations, huge sea fans, a small school of 10-15 lb African Pompano, lobsters galore (I've never seen them stacked up like this and tons of other reef fish (including the very tasty grouper and hogfish). At the end of the day, Monty and Steve had 7 crab for their dinner party and I had 3 nice sized fish (2 grouper and a hogfish). In case you are curious as to why we didn't get the lobster - they are out of season right now.

Arriving back at the boat, I cleaned and fileted (sp?) the larger grouper, and packaged the other two into ziplock bags as gifts to give away. The four of us together with another couple ate fresh grouper baked with peppers, onions and tomatoes, served with all the trimmings of course! After dinner we gazed at the stars overhead and wondered how many there were up there. When we got back to our boat, Sandra and I lay up on the deck for awhile before going to sleep to admire the stars some more. We could even see the Southern Cross constellation low in the sky - quite a treat to every mariner.

Happy star-gazing,

Pete and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands

Sent: Monday, June 08, 1998 12:01 AM

Subject: Hello sharkies

98-06-07

Hello Sharkies:

Just a quick note to all you Sharkies out there to say hi, and to let you know that we will miss the racing, the friends and the comraderie we've shared over the past years. Hope all who are participating in this year's World Cup are enjoying themselves (Go Alfred and Bodo!!).

As far as racing back on Lake Ontario goes, I hope someone will be able to come up with a strategy to beat the old men on Dakin's boat this year. Maybe if we could just find that phone they have connected to the

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Wind Gods ...

Go get 'em, Scarlett!

Cheers,

Peter and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands

Sent: Sunday, June 07, 1998 11:44 PM

Subject: more travels

98-06-07

Sunday night here in beautiful Exuma, and we're sitting under a near full moon, temperature about 30 degrees (Celsius), and wind from the southeast at 5-8 knots. Hardly a cloud in the sky, but just enough to highlight the brightness from the moon.

What a change from the first few months. The summer weather pattern has really kicked in, and we've enjoyed beautiful conditions for the past 3-4 weeks or more. We arrived back to George Town late last week after being away on our latest adventure. We left George Town May 19th for a bit of a get away, accompanied by our friends Gwen and Bob on "Rockhopper" (a Morgan 43). Sailed just over 25 miles from George Town to North Long Island (Calabash Bay) in a light (< 10 knots) southeast breeze. What else is new, winds straight on the nose!, and ended up motoring the last half just 'cause we got tired of not pointing to our destination. Stayed in Calabash overnight, the anchorage of which is just off the Cape Santa Maria resort, a Canadian owned luxury club. Cape Santa Maria is named after Columbus' boat, which apparently hit this reef off Long Island's northern-most shore. Next morning we sailed another 25 miles to Conception Island, still in light air, still on the nose, and still ended up motor sailing the last half of the way in. Had a great strike fishing on the way in, a nice 3' dolphin fish, which shook the hook after doing a tail dance behind the boat. Great colors!!

Conception Island is uninhabited, and is a nature preserve on shore. Lots of bird life (including an osprey, and many white long tailed tropic birds), and plenty of white sand beached for Sandra to stroll on and collect shells. We enjoyed snorkeling on the abundant reefs both in the anchorage itself, and just around the corner from it. Saw three of the largest grouper I've ever seen (two of which were right under our boat!), sting rays, squid, a small nurse shark and many other colorful reef fish. Its like having an aquarium in your back yard!! Went for a short dinghy ride to a creek in which the turtles come to "sunbathe" at high tide. You go a ways up the creek, then turn your motor off and either drift or row in the two foot deep water so as not to scare them. We ended up seeing two turtles, three sharks and a stingray, all within 30 minutes, and all very close to the boat. Coming out of the creek there was a great conch bed, the richest we've seen on the trip to date. We've never seen such abundant sea life.

Met some great people at Conception also: Skip and Anne were sailing on Epicurus, a beautiful Deerfoot 62 rigged out to the max. For those of you who don't sail, this is one of the thoroughbreds of ocean racing. (I know, I know - only in my dreams!!) Also met a couple who were on their way home after a five-year circumnavigation - she was 8 months pregnant and was carrying a 14 month old infant (born on some island in

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the Indian Ocean!!) All that is quite something in itself, but to know that they were traveling in a small 28 foot Westsail cutter makes it even more astounding.

>From Conception we sailed south to Rum Cay, apparently named after some cargo that was shipwrecked there. There are about 75 people living on Rum, most in and around Port Nelson. The general store, school, "government building" and two restaurants make up almost the whole town, and a fancy marina at the south end of the harbour caters to the sport-fishing crowd. Fishing is supposed to be great just east of Rum Cay, but we didn't venture out into the open Atlantic for that. We were amazed, though, when we saw two large male dolphin fish jump clear out of the water as if they were going to take our lines. They were going VERY fast, and must have traveled about 30' out of the water before landing next to the lures. Unfortunately, we didn't even get a nibble on the way by! Snorkeling on the reefs near Port Nelson was also spectacular, with coral and invertebrate life so abundant that it brought back memories of my marine biology days at UBC! Gwen even pointed out a spotted black moray eel on one of the dives. The anchorage in Port Nelson was a bit rolly, and we set two anchors so we could point into the swell to reduce the roll. Next time we might try the anchorage on the other side of the island, but there is no town there.

>From Conception we sailed (yes, sailed, all day!!) back to North Long Island, then down the inside (west coast) of Long Island over the next few days, eventually making it to Salt Pond, where the Long Island Regatta was held. Sandra and I were surprised to hear Joe and Amy on "A-Tack Cat" on the radio one day, as they were on their way in to "join us for the party". Amy is Sandra's running buddy, and they were happy to hit the roads every morning before the sun got too hot. I joined up with my buddy Alfred Johnson from Nassau, and again sailed on his B class sloop "Whiplash" with him. Also sailed on an A class sloop called "Unka Boss". Finished 3rd in the B class, and would have ended up 3rd in Unka Boss as well had we not broken the boom on the last beat of the last race!! Yikes!! - quite something to see 6 guys out on the pry, and the next minute they're in the water. Such is racing these sloops in the Bahamas - lots of last minute fixing jobs being done on the boats, and a whole lot of yelling and screaming between boats all around the course.

>From Long Island we had a great sail back here, joined by a friend Rob off of "To Fa'a", who was in Long Island for the races as well. We logged 143 miles during the trip, and the boat ran great. Sandra and I managed to get one side of the teak coaming in the cockpit refinished during the regatta days (thanks to electrical power and a sander lent by Rockhopper), and we caught 3 barracuda while fishing on the way home. All in all it was a great trip, and makes us wonder why so many people just come to George Town without ever going beyond to explore what's literally just around the corner.

>From here we'll head back up to the Abacos again, where we'll join Tom and Dianne Carpenter on "Larkspur" to race in the Abaco Cruising Regatta.

Cheers,

Peter and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heelingr@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 1998 1:37 AM

Subject: the Exumas

98-05-15 (This looks like a "typo" to me - should be 98-06-15? - Bill H.)

Hello again all - hope we're not boring you with these tales from abroad.

We left GeorgeTown last Tuesday, the day after a terrible thunderstorm that just about sunk the town. I've never seen it come down so heavy (and from a guy who lived in Vancouver for 12 years, that's saying alot!!). Fortunately, it didn't last long (unlike Vancouver at times), and a few hours later we were back going about our last minute chores to get ready to leave. Good thing we got the email done early in the morning, 'cause the storm knocked out the microwave tower link in George Town, which meant that the whole of the Exumas were without phone lines for days. Apparently they are still not right yet a week later, so I don't know if we'll have any luck sending this out tomorrow or not. Oh well ..., manyana.

Pulled up the anchor and sailed out of George Town in complete style, without even turning on the ignition key for the engine. Had a glorious sail north to Lee Stocking Island, where the Caribbean Marine Research Centre is based (more on that later). Winds were following, from the south to south east at about 10-15 knots, and the seas were 2-3 feet and regular. Couldn't really have had it any easier.

Fishing story of the day: Something (yes again!) took the line just off Barretarre in about 100' of water, but we weren't sure what it was. I had the drag set kind of tight (since the last one we lost shook itself loose after over spinning the line right after the strike) and within a split second of hitting the rod doubled over, almost breaking, then went slack. I thought I could see a big shape and a fin where the lure used to be, but Sandra didn't see it (we've been told that unless two people see it, its not real!!). We don't know what it was, but it must have been big to go through 60lb test line so quickly. Oh well, another of my favorite fishing lures gone!!

The Caribbean Marine Research Centre was interesting, got the tour shortly after we dropped the hook. They used to have scientists there investigating grouper (fish), lobster, and conch, and they have some interesting exhibits to show from their time there. Now the rage is to investigate corals, since many companies are using coral by-products in lotions, etc, these days. It was definitely a worthwhile stop, if nothing but for to see what can be done on these islands when ambition and money are combined. The grounds were immaculate - flowers and groomed trees everywhere, there were well-constructed clean buildings, knowledgeable and friendly staff, and it really looked like a fun place to be and work. No wonder why the scientists try to get grants to do their field research there!

The next day we left Lee Stocking Island and headed north to Black Point, on Great Guana Cay. Again the winds were from the south to south east, with the wind speed and seas the same. Its great being in the summer trades! Sandra and I decided to put up the spinnaker, and boy was it pretty (and fast!). The last time we had it up (the first since we left Toronto), was coming south from Eleuthra with Alfred and Sabine

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aboard. We got going between 6 and 6.5 knots and just stayed there for the longest time. What should have been over a five hour trip was reduced to four, and we pulled in to Dotham Cut about an hour ahead of Rockhopper (a Morgan 43). We sailed right through the Cut, only engaging the engine into Black Point proper. Black Point is a beautiful small town (officially called the Settlement of Black Point), with very friendly people. We ended up staying there four days (3 nights), and doing all kinds of neat stuff. Got to helm a Bahamian Sloop (a c-class boat), which was built by the husband of the woman who ran the "cafe" (Lorraine's Cafe) we dined in (we also got a great loaf of coconut bread from her!). Had Bob from Rockhopper, and Rod from Seclusion, on the prys, and Clayton (Lorraine's brother) stayed in the middle of the boat. Sandra and Gwen followed in the dinghy yelling instructions, taking pictures, and getting some video footage. It was great fun - "ride the prys, boys!!". Also got to climb a very tall mast that Adderly (from Adderly's friendly store) has in his front yard. He needed to have his "new" VHF antenna put up, since the last one was blown down in a hurricane two years ago. Turns out the antenna was for a car cellular phone, not a VHF, but for some strange reason it worked fine anyway. The view from the top was spectacular - could see all the way south to Farmers Cay. We also were privileged to get a tour of Uncle Willie's "Trench Town", a combination "art gallery" and pothole farming plot. He has incredible wood figures (like driftwood art) that he pulled from the brush displayed artistically amongst limestone crevices filled with various fruit and vegetable crops (including some great papaya, banana, peppers, avocado, a type of apple, sour sop, lime, orange, onions, potatoes and many more). Its amazing how quickly the fruit grows here, and all year long, too. Eat your heart out St. Catherines!!

>From Black Point we had a short sail (and motor combined) up to Staniel Cay. Went diving in Thunderball grotto, the famous cave where James Bond's "Thunderball" and also the film "Splash" were filmed. We were here with Alfred and Sabine in early March, but the water was much warmer now, and as a result we were able to stay in and explore much longer. It was indeed spectacular, a huge underwater cave with an opening to the sky above, only accessible by snorkeling through narrow passages while surrounded by hundreds of fish. The day was topped off with a great meal (Sandra had Cornish game hen and I had fresh grilled dolphin) at the Staniel Cay Yacht Club.

>From here we will travel another short distance up to Compass Cay, just south of the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park. If the phones are working I will send this off tomorrow. If not, it may be awhile as there are no Batelco offices for some distance north of here. We'll keep you informed of how we're doing as we go.

Cheers,

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands

Sent: Thursday, June 25, 1998 3:41 PM

Subject: Back in the Abacos

98-06-25

Hello all:

Well, needless to say, we haven't been successful at getting a

connection to Batelnet since leaving George Town. Turns out the storm in George Town did a lot more damage than people thought, and the phone lines were down intermittently for the whole time we were there. And to top it off, when we got to Eleuthra the server in Nassau was down, so we were unable to connect there. Lets hope it works today. We've been quite frustrated at not being able to connect lately, since we know people have been trying to reach us.

Since we last wrote we have travelled north through the Exumas, across to Spanish Wells (North Eleuthra), and up to Marsh Harbour, Abaco (with an overnight in Lynyard Cay).

Compass Cay was gorgeous. We stayed on a mooring off the marina, which was run by Tucker Rolle, a relative of Lorraine (of Lorraine's Cafe from Black Point)!. Tucker was in the process of making the dock at the marina longer, in addition to building himself a new house!! Quite the jobs! Bob and I helped him with some construction, which saved us mooring fees, and I got to go out spearfishing with him and two other boaters. Tucker got three groupers, two very large and one small, and my little grouper was even smaller than his smallest!. He could spot the fish from much further away than I could, could dive down deeper faster, and used a Hawaiian sling for a spear. He was quite the site to watch ... very humbling, but educational. After two days at Compass Cay, we moved up to Warderick Wells, where the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park headquarters are. The warden Ray Darville and his wife Evelyn live there, along with their baby boy Jonathan, Rays older son Ray junior (from a previous marriage), and two Royal Bahamas Defense Force personnel (who help with the policing of the park - mostly scaring off poachers).

The Park is also gorgeous, and allows one to see how abundant the sea life was in the Exumas before man's intervention. Lobster, huge grouper, schools of snapper, huge conch - all within site from the surface, and none really afraid of man at all. Sandra and I got to go aboard a Tayana 55, a beautiful sailboat that had pulled in for a few days on his way to Venezuela. We also went for a drift dive, where you jump off the dinghy and hang on to it without it being anchored, and get carried with the current from the anchorage all the way out through the cut into Exuma Sound. Saw all kinds of neat stuff, the best of which was a HUGE stingray, about 8 feet across or larger, laying on the bottom while we drifted over top. You could see the outline of his ribs under the sand that he sifts on top of himself. We hoped we wouldn't wake him or make him mad!!

>From the Park we sailed north to Highburn Cay. We originally wanted to go to Normans Cay, an ex-drug smuggling spot that has a sunken airplane and buildings with bullet holes in it, but passed it by to get to the phone on Highburn. Had to call the parents, who by now were probably wondering if we were still alive.

Anchored behind Highburn Cay in a beautiful bay, with the "Octopus Gardens" reef in the middle of it. It was a great spot. We took our boat over to Allans Cay the next day to see the iguanas, big, ugly (but I guess pretty in their own way), colorful reptiles that come out from there hideaways as soon as the dinghy approaches the shore. Gwen and Bob came over in their dinghy, as Gwen was busy making bread when we left, and we travelled back together in the big boat. Speared a big grouper when I went out fishing with Leroy, a guy I met on a fishing boat, so we had fresh grouper for dinner that night. Also got some

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conch while we were out on a drift dive.

Sailed the next day to Royal Island, Eleuthra, about 50 miles in all. Had the spinnaker up almost all the way, and had a great sail, and to top it off as we were approaching Royal Island we caught an 8 lb mahogany snapper on the fishing line. As soon as we anchored I went in to the dock to clean fish and conch, and we had a great meal of conch fritters, fresh grilled snapper, mixed rice, and fresh salad. We ate in the airconditioning aboard "Chilcat", a 36' Grand Banks trawler with Gerry and Pat aboard.

>From Royal Island we motored over to Spanish Wells, where we got a few gallons of drinking water to last us up to the Abacos. Did some shopping in a real grocery store (what a concept), then pulled out to a mooring ball for the night. The dinghy traffic was very busy through the mooring field, and lasted well past dark and started up before light - all doing about 20mph of course!! Went to town for dinner with the whole gang, Bob and Gwen from Rockhopper, Gerry and Pat from Chilcat, Bob and Dianne from Tortuga (a Grand Banks 49), and ourselves. Even had carrot cake and ice cream for dessert! Left for the long sail (another 50 miles) up to Little Harbour, Abaco, at 6:45am. Tip-toed our way through the Ridley Head reef on the way out, no problems for our draft at all - the shallowest we saw was 8.5 feet. Bob and Gwen elected to get a pilot to guide them out, probably a cheap price to pay for insurance in a big 43' boat with a 6' draft. The wind was the usual 10-15 knots from the south to southeast, and seas were smooth, with swells of about 3 feet. Again we used the spinnaker all day, and we were thankful to have carted it along all this way just for the few days we've used it.

Arrived off Little Harbour around 4:15pm, and decided to anchor off Lynyard Cay, as we had heard that the bugs get bad inside Little Harbour in the summer. Went for a swim before eating aboard Rockhopper and crashing early. Its amazing how tiring being on the water all day can make you. Next morning we sailed up to Sandy Cay, and protected sea park (reef), where we had a great snorkel amongst hundreds of fish. Saw all kinds of fish we hadn't seen before, but decided it was time to get out of the water when we saw a large (8' minimum) reef shark cruising near us. We didn't mind so much seeing the 5' nurse shark earlier, but the reef sharks are a bit more intimidating! As soon as we got back to the boat a squall hit, we dragged anchor for a bit before it took, then it poured rain for about 20 minutes (and blew up to 28 knots under the thunderhead!).

We survived that little ordeal, then motored the rest of the way up to Marsh Harbour. That was the most we had used the engine for the past 3 weeks! We're now safe ans sound in the Conch Inn marina, where we spent February's bad weather days, and almost feel like we're at hope again. The regatta is just around the corner, so we'll do a few jobs we've needed to do for awhile while here before the party begins on July 2nd.

Bye for now,

Pete and Sandra

PS. Please use aker@cmcc.ca as a return address if you want to write.

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Monday, January 25, 1999 12:27 PM

Subject: the adventure continues

99-01-24

Hello all:

Its been quite a while since we last wrote (July '98 I think), so its time we carry on with the stories from the lower latitudes. We miss you all and have appreciated hearing from many of you. Sorry to have caused distress to those who were worried that we might have sunk or got swallowed by a hurricane! We're still alive and doing well - and have a whole other six months of adventures ahead of us. Before we start with this years adventures, we'll give you a quick rundown of what we've been up to for the last little while.

We pulled the boat out for storage at the end of July in Indiantown, Florida, about 30 miles inland from the east coast near Lake Okeechobee. We both went to Grand Cayman in August, where Peter worked and Sandra played for the month. We had a wonderful time there, and (surprisingly) Peter thoroughly enjoyed working again after being away from it for while. (Sandra thoroughly enjoyed the air conditioning and satellite TV!!).

In September we returned to Heeling Hands and started working on the many projects we thought would help us during our next year afloat. Even the short list is long, but already we have been enjoying the quiet mast (new wiring and foam conduit), the new head and holding tank (that's a toilet to you non boaters), new pressure water system, and especially the new found space by reducing the pilot berth width by six inches. We also have created many new stowage spaces this year, so have been able to hide away many more chocolate bars for Sandra!

In October we traveled again, this time to visit family in Pittsburgh and Vancouver. It was nice to get away from the heat of Florida, but at the same time, by the time three weeks was up, we were glad to return. In November, Sandra left me to work on the boat while she returned to Toronto to do a bit of work and try to arrange some work for next summer. She returned at the beginning of December surprised to hear that I hadn't completed ALL of the jobs yet!! A month later, with her great help, we finished enough to get on the road again. After saying many long good-byes to our new found friends at Indiantown (mostly because yet another job would crop up the day before we were supposed to leave!), we finally left the dock on Sunday, January 10th. How's that for a quick summary of the past 6 months!!

The trip down the St. Lucie canal and through the Intracoastal Waterway south to the Lake Worth Inlet was uneventful, and we were there by Monday night. We were pleased to be able to speak to Sally and Gina at the Indiantown Marina from the anchorage, surprised that our new (VHF) antenna was able to reach so far (about 30 miles away). Now if only the transmission and reception will stay so good for the upcoming year!. Tuesday we moved down to anchor just south of Peanut Island, right next to the inlet at Lake Worth, and wait for weather to cross the Gulf Stream to the Bahamas. Some boats had apparently been there since before Christmas! Hopefully we wouldn't have to wait for so long.

On Thursday, January 14th, our patience had run out and we decided to sail down to Fort Lauderdale to get a better angle to sail across the Gulf Stream to the Lesser Bahama Bank (at Memory Rocks). For those of

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you who aren't familiar with the area, the "crossing" is about 55 miles basically straight east (a course of 90 degrees). However, the Gulf Stream is a strong 3 knot current that flows from south to north, so you have to angle yourself in a southerly direction (on a course of about 115 degrees) to make it across in a straight line.

After sailing for three hours southward in an easterly breeze, which was blowing about 15-20 knots, and with seas between 4-6 feet (with the occasional eight foot wave in there for good measure!), the wind started to shift a bit to the southeast. This was a good thing, since the wind was forecast to move to the southeast and then to the south with an approaching cold front. We decided it was time to tack, and head across - we'd had enough of Florida and were ready to get back to the Bahamas! Shortly after we tacked, though, the wind shifted back to the east again, and with the current and the wind we were heading way too far north instead of east. Four hours after leaving the inlet, we had made it only 7.5 miles southeast of the outer marker! Enough of this - we put the motor on, furlled the jib, and headed straight on the rhumb line to Memory Rocks.

Bed time for now - more later.

Cheers,

Pete and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Monday, January 25, 1999 10:39 AM

Subject: ready to leave the Abacos

99-01-25

Now that we've been in the Abacos for about 10 days, we're ready to make good our escape. We've visited all the old hangouts, including Marsh Harbour, Hopetown and Man O'War, but didn't spend any time at all at Green Turtle or Guana (we'll do this in July when we're back here again). We've been snorkelling a few times and have eaten our share of freshly caught conch. Its been a bit murky (and cold) to spear fish. Sandra officially "caught" her first conch yesterday, as we were out to catch dinner. She seemed surprised that it was so easy - so I'll have to be sure that she does this some more!!

We've been on a mooring here in Hopetown for the past four days, waiting for this front to pass through. It hit last night about 21:00 and now the winds have shifted to the north so we're going to head down to Little Harbour. The seas offshore are still 8-10 feet as the winds are still up around 20 knots, so we'll wait there for awhile for things to abate (should be by Wednesday) before heading south to Royal Island. We plan on taking the same route as we did with Alfred and Sabina last year, except this year we probably will not stop in Eleuthra, we'll get right over to the Exumas.

We've had great reunions with new and old friends here, including Tom and Diane from Larkspur, who we'll be sailing to Antigua with this year, Gwen and Bob from Rockhopper who we sailed with a bunch last year and will meet up again with in the Exumas, Lou and Ronni on Gihon Dragon who we met in Man O'War Cay last year and met again in Indiantown this summer/fall, Paul and Marie on Milene III who we met in Indiantown this year, Don and Ruth on Tranquility who we met here in Hopetown last year,

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and Dick and Sheila on Patriot who came by to offer assistance last year in Hopetwon as we dragged anchor during a storm (remember that, Jacques and Janet!). Its always sad to say goodbye, but we're sure we'll see all of them down the line soon.

It'll be a while 'til we connect again, as there isn't a Batelco office south of here until we get to Staniel Cay. So if you don't here from us for awhile, please don't worry. We'll keep writing as we go and send (and recieve) when we can.

Bye for now, ciao

Pete and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Monday, January 25, 1999 12:42 PM

Subject: Gulf Stream crossing

99-01-25

Hello gang:

When we left you last night we were tired of sailing and decided to motorsail across the Gulf Stream. That was about noon on Thursday, January 14th. At about 16:30 the rain squalls started. Each squall line carried between 25 and 40 knots under it, and we reefed the mainsail accordingly each time. In the one 40 knot squall, we even ran with it after double reefing the main. It reminded us of sailing in the squalls in Grenada where one can barely see the bow of the boat 'cause its raining so hard.

About 19:15 we had our "close encounter" with a freighter. This big ship was on a course to pass us off our port side and I called him on the radio to make sure he could see us. He answered and said "Don't worry, I see you, I see you". Being somewhat assured by this we carried on. About 3 minutes later, I called back, since he was now definitely on a collision course with us. He responded by saying "Yes, yes, I see you on my port side - I have another boat on my starboard side so I can't turn away any more". I responded "I AM the boat on your starboard side", and altered our course. We never did hear back from the freighter. He passed about 5 boat lengths (less than 200 feet) in front of us. Another freighter passed at about 20:15, but this one was well away, at least 1/2 a mile.

With the rain, wind and seas, it made for a long crossing. We got on to the banks at about midnight, which made for a 16 hour crossing altogether, 12 since we got smart and started to motor. We continued motoring to Mangrove Cay, where we dropped anchor at about 06:00 and had a much needed rest. Also gave the motor a much needed rest.

Woke up at 08:00 and started up again. There was no wind at all, flat calm seas and beautiful sunshine. Its almost as if the wind and sea Gods were testing us and once we passed the test they relented.

Pulled into Green Turtle Cay at 21:30 (nighttime). There is a very well marked channel (with reflective markers) into White Sound that we came familiar with last year, and were comfortable using in the dark. Had a great sleep, both of out cold and didn't move at all for about 9 hours, and woke up to another clear sunny day. Had a beautiful sail in 12-15 knot easterly winds to Marsh Harbour, where we checked in, cleared customs, and met up with Tom and Diane (Larkspur) and Gwen and Bob

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(Rockhopper). It was nice to be "back home" in the Bahamas again.

Peter and Sandra

P.S. If you are getting these messages and don't want them, please let us know and we'll take your name off our group mailing list (we won't be offended). If we're not sending to someone we should be, please let us know. And, if we're not using your proper address (and you find out somehow), please let us know.

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Thursday, January 28, 1999 7:22 PM

Subject: into the Exumas

99-01-28

After a good two days of sailing, we're completely immersed into our long-lost lifestyle of living in the Exumas again. We left Little Harbour the day after we got there (Jan. 26th) as the forecast was favourable. Had a great sail in ENE winds between 15-20 knots. Seas were a bit bigger than we expected, varying between 6-10 feet, but it was nothing we couldn't handle because we were on a broad reach. After leaving the anchorage at Little Harbour at 07:00, we arrived at the anchorage at Royal Island at 15:30 - not bad for a 50+ nautical mile day. Had a great "sundowner" get together with Bill and Nancy and Bud aboard "Cabaret"- a 53 foot catamaran we sailed down with (and kept up with!!).

After a great night's sleep in Royal Island, we left at 07:00 again to head south to the Exumas. Before 08:00 Peter had landed a 7lb Mahogany snapper (the big brother of the one we caught on the way north last year!) - so we put the rod away for the rest of the trip. Winds when we left Royal were from the NE at 15 knots, and being in the Lee of Eleuthera, seas were between 2-3 feet. By the time we reached Six Shillings Cays (about 12 miles), the winds picked up and shifted to about 20 from the East and we put a reef in the main. Wind and seas built as we went along, and by the time we got to Beacon Cay we were in steady 25 knot winds from the ESE (a close reach), with seas up to about 4-5 feet and choppy. We were about ready to put second reef into the main but decided not to as we could bear off behind Beacon Cay and run in it's lee to our anchorage. We said goodbye to "Old Squaw", the boat we did this leg with, as we got to our nice protected anchorage behind Roberts Cay (just north of Allen's and Highborne Cays about 15:00. After setting the two anchors (to deal with tidal current changes) Peter cleaned the fish and Sandra started to get dinner ready. Had a great dinner of grilled snapper with pineapple-corn chutney and jasmine rice medley. Mmmmm. Sandra will definitely have to get a cookbook written out of all these great meals.

Today we slept in ('til 07:00!!), had a relaxing morning, then went out snorkelling for awhile. The water was clear and the reefs were as gorgeous as we remembered, but the water is still cold!! On our second reef, Peter managed to get a nice slipper lobster, so we quit fishing and decided to get back to the boat for lunch. Finished up most of yesterday's snapper prepared as a "snapper salad" served on fresh avacado (purchased in Hopetown). Mmmmm again! While Peter moved anchors again, Sandra prepared some snacks for a sundowner get-together with all the boaters in the anchorage. Just while we were getting ready

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for our cockpit showers, we spied a huge eagle ray near the boat. Sandra put on a mask and fins and swam with it for awhile, admiring the way it picked up a small conch and swam around the boat before dropping it again. It was at least as wide as Sandra is long - probably close to 6-7 feet from wing tip to wing tip - and a very graceful swimmer.

Had a nice get together with the other sailors here in the anchorage during sundown. Three boats are from Canada, two from Quebec and one from Ottawa (so Peter got to practice his french again), and one "Buckshot", with Dave and Gerry aboard, from the States who we met in Indiantown this fall.

Now we're getting ready to sit down to a lobster with bow-tie pasta dinner so I've got to stop writing. Keep in touch.

Cheers,

Peter and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Monday, February 08, 1999 11:49 AM

Subject: relaxing in the Exumas

99-02-08

Hello all:

Since we last wrote we have been spending the past two weeks absolutely enjoying the sunny clear weather and the clear aquamarine water. And with the luck we've been having with fishing, we've been well fed, maintaining our diet of fresh fish, lobster and conch!

Spent about one full week in the protected anchorage at Robert's Cay. Thoroughly enjoyed being there totally protected the night the front came through with winds to 38 knots, while we hung motionless on our anchors. Met up with friends we had met in the intra-coastal waterway last year - Frank and Audrey Hand, from Fredricton, New Brunswick, and convinced them (not a hard job) to share the anchorage with us. Had a great three days exploring the surrounding cays, and searching for the wild pigs of Ship Channel Cay!

As the weather abated a bit we moved down to Highburn Cay, only about five miles or so, and into the north anchorage. Here we finally were able to use a phone (but not email) to let family know we were still alive. Also were able to get in touch with the US to try to arrange a replacement solar panel, as ours gave up the ghost somewhere between the Abacos and the Exumas. I think there was a leaky junction box, as it was a mass of corrosion when I opened it up.

The cut between Highburn and Allen's Cay was very good to us, as we had a great meal of lobster one night, and of grouper the other. Sandra and I went out for about a half an hour drifting around in the current, and managed to bring in a king size (9" tail) and a queen size (8" tail) lobster for dinner. Needless to say, it was a very satisfying dive, and we had the whole rest of the day to sit around and read without really having to work to catch dinner!

We left Highburn at daybreak on Friday, February 5th, and had a beautiful motor-sail five miles out into Exuma Sound. Winds were light (about 8-10 knots), but with the prop turning at idle speed we could manage between 5.5 and 6.5 knots - just perfect for trolling. At 09:30

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we landed a gorgeous dolphin fish (otherwise known as dorado or mahi-mahi). It jumped and fought as Peter reeled it in, and when it got close to the boat we could really appreciate its neon blue, green and yellow colouring - a very pretty fish indeed. It weighed in at 7 pounds.

Filletted the fish and had so much meat (enough to feed eight), we decided to share it when we arrived at the anchorage. Two boats were anchored at Black Point when we pulled in, one of whom we knew from Indiantown - Mike on "Daze Off"! We had a great dinner together with Mike, and Bob and Sue on P.A.. Mike had lots of stories to tell about all the calamity aboard his boat since leaving Indiantown - the worst of which was breaking his rudder when his anchor dragged one night while at Gun Cay! He is single handing now, having "disposed" of his crew Judy on to another boat about a week ago. Apparently things just didn't work out!

We sailed the 9 miles down here to Farmers Cay for the Festival and Regatta on Saturday, and watched Clayton and "Magic" aboard "Nuff Respect" blow a great lead and end up second last. This is the same C-class Bahamian sloop that Rockhopper Bob and I sailed on last year while passing through Black Point. We'll spend another day here getting email, disposing of garbage, and doing some fishing before heading a little further south.

Bye for now,
Pete and Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]
Sent: Thursday, April 01, 1999 4:56 PM

Subject: the adventure continues

99-01-04

Hello all:

Its been a while since we last wrote, and we're writing to say it'll be a while 'til we write again. We're heading off to Antigua tomorrow aboard "Larkspur" (with Tom Carpenter), accompanied by Wayne Lee and crew David and Peter aboard "Glory Days".

We've had a great time here in the Exumas, between all the grouper, lobster and dorado, and the beautiful sailing, swimming and snorkelling, its been a wonderful stay. We won the "Round Stocking Island" race and came first in our class and second overall in the "Elizabeth Harbour" race during regatta here. And Peter won the "Longest Blow" in the conch horn blowing contest (Sandra is convinced its because I'm full of hot air!).

Had a great visit with friends from the Netherlands, Lex and Mayke Bouter, who got to experience the "real" Bahamian experience with lots of great sailing, swimming, fishing and eating. I'm convinced lex had a direct line to the wind Gods, as every where we went we had the wind behind us. And just last week we got to introduce Cam McDermaid to "Island Life" with some relaxation and unwinding, together with swimming, sailing, eating and drinking!!

We'll be in touch to let you know how Antigua Race Week was, and how we

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fared on the "Larkspur". Wish us luck.

Cheers,

Peter & Sandra

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Wednesday, June 16, 1999 9:12 AM

To: Pam Aker

Subject: Back from Antigua

99-06-12

Hello everybody!

Yes, we're still alive and well. We had a great trip down to Antigua and back, and now Sandra is up in Belleville working and Peter is back in the Bahamas single-handing the boat up to the Abacos for race week up there.

The trip down to Antigua couldn't have been better. Tom (aboard Larkspur) and Wayne (with Peter and David aboard Glory Days) arrived at the end of March and we put Heeling Hands on a mooring in a protected cove in George Town. We left April 2nd and had fantastic conditions for traveling southeast: 10-12 knots of wind from the north (yes, north!), calm seas, and a full moon. Stayed on the rhumb line the whole time. Sailed about a third of the time, and motor-sailed the rest, keeping our speed up near six knots the whole time. Made it to Jost van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands in 5 and a half days! Since we arrived early and had some extra time, we raced the Larkspur in one race of the BVI Spring Regatta - a good tune up for us all, as we placed near the back of the fleet!

After about five days in the BVI, we sailed overnight from the Bitter End to St. Martin on another calm night. Had the boats measured (needed a special Caribbean Sailing Association measurement certificate to race in Antigua) and took a quick tour of both the Dutch and French sides. Weren't too impressed with the busyness and hooplah of Philipsburg (cruise ship haven), but the French side needs more exploration.

We sailed to St. Barts (only about 20 miles) in the morning and stayed the day at the city dock. Sandra and I thoroughly enjoyed it there, as it was very continental. Fresh baguette, great cheeses from France, and good prices for French wines! Left there at about six at night and arrived in Falmouth Harbour in the morning. Again flat calm all night, and only for the last four hours or so in the morning did the 15-20knot south-east trade winds finally fill in to give us a taste of what it might have been like the whole way down. We were happy to be there, safe and sound, both boats in good shape.

I'll update you on the regattas in Antigua in the next message. Bye for now,

Peter

[Click here for a great picture of "Larkspur"!](#)

From: Peter & Sandra aboard Heeling Hands [heeling@mail.batelnet.bs]

Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 1999 3:48 PM

To: Pam Aker

Subject: Antigua Sailing Week

99-07-11

Bahamas!

Hello everybody:

When we arrived in Antigua we celebrated with a bottle of champagne and some french cheese and crackers. We were extremely happy that we had arrived safe and sound, and that the whole 1000 nautical miles had entailed only 4-5 hours of sailing to weather!

To our surprise, the morning we arrived into Falmouth Harbour the marina was buzzing with activity. The Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta was only two days away - this is the one where all sorts of classic yachts from all over the world put on a show and have some "friendly" racing against each other. This included the likes of all three of the J-class boats (yes, Valsheeda, Shamrock and Endeavour - all 130' or so each!!), Ticonderoga, Truly Classic, Whitehawk, the new W class boats White Wings and Wild Horses, etc. Truly an amazing site with all the bright work, chrome, bronze and stainless on impeccably maintained yachts.

It turned out we were able to enter the regatta, thanks to the help of a local guy, Eddy Baretta ("Fast Eddy"), who also had a Hinckley B40. With the 3 B40's in the race, we almost had our own one design fleet! Racing was good, with mandatory port tack starts and primarily reaching and running courses. Unfortunately for us, the winds were blowing strong, 18-25 knots, with accompanying seas of 6-8 feet. With the big 150% genoa and the bigger full battened main, we were terribly over powered, and our boat speed suffered. We didn't place so good, but still had a lot of fun chasing Wayne on Glory Days around the course. The best part about it was being side by side all the other classics on the water - a site we'll never forget.

Antigua Sailing Week followed the week after, and entailed 5 long races over 6 days. Local knowledge was a big payoff, as avoiding current and and catching land effect wind shifts were essential. We'll know better next time. Diane (Tom's wife), the girls from California (Tami, Janine and Celeste), as well as Will and Shelley (and Ken and "Barbie") joined the three of us so we had a full complement of crew - for racing and partying! The races were exhausting, not so much from the physical exertion or brainwork, but from being out in the heat and sun and salt spray for 6-7 hours. Each night there was some sort of social event - usually sponsored by a liquor agency - and dealing with the previous night's hangover was an ordeal of its own for some. Everything you may have ever read about Antigua Sailing Week - the races, the parties, the fun - is true. With 256 boats registered for the event, everything from 24' sport boats to 152' maxis (Mari Cha III), its an event that every racing sailor needs to experience at least once.

At the end of it all, we were completely exhausted, and ready for a break from the party scene. Two short overnight sails (first to St. Barts, then to the BVI) brought us back to the Bitter End Yacht Club and a well deserved rest. Sandra and I were lucky to find a good price on flights to Toronto, so we took the opportunity to get up for Bill and Christine's wedding and get away from boating for a week. It was nice to see friends in Toronto again, and very kind of Jim and Jackie to let us bunk with them during our stay.

Hope everyone is doing well. I'll update later on.

Peter

More to come!

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